Booklist
Leading book discovery

Booklist Reader

Book and audiobook recommendations for all ages

March 2023
Vol. 2 No. 7

INSIDE:

The Essentials: Immigration and Belonging in Women's Fiction

Trend Alert: Performers' Memoirs

Listen Up: Sounds like Shakespeare

The Essentials: From Page to Screen and Back to Page

Cover illustration by Amanda Arlotta; cover design by Elena Giavaldi, from *Violeta,* by Isabel Allende

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LIBRARY READS

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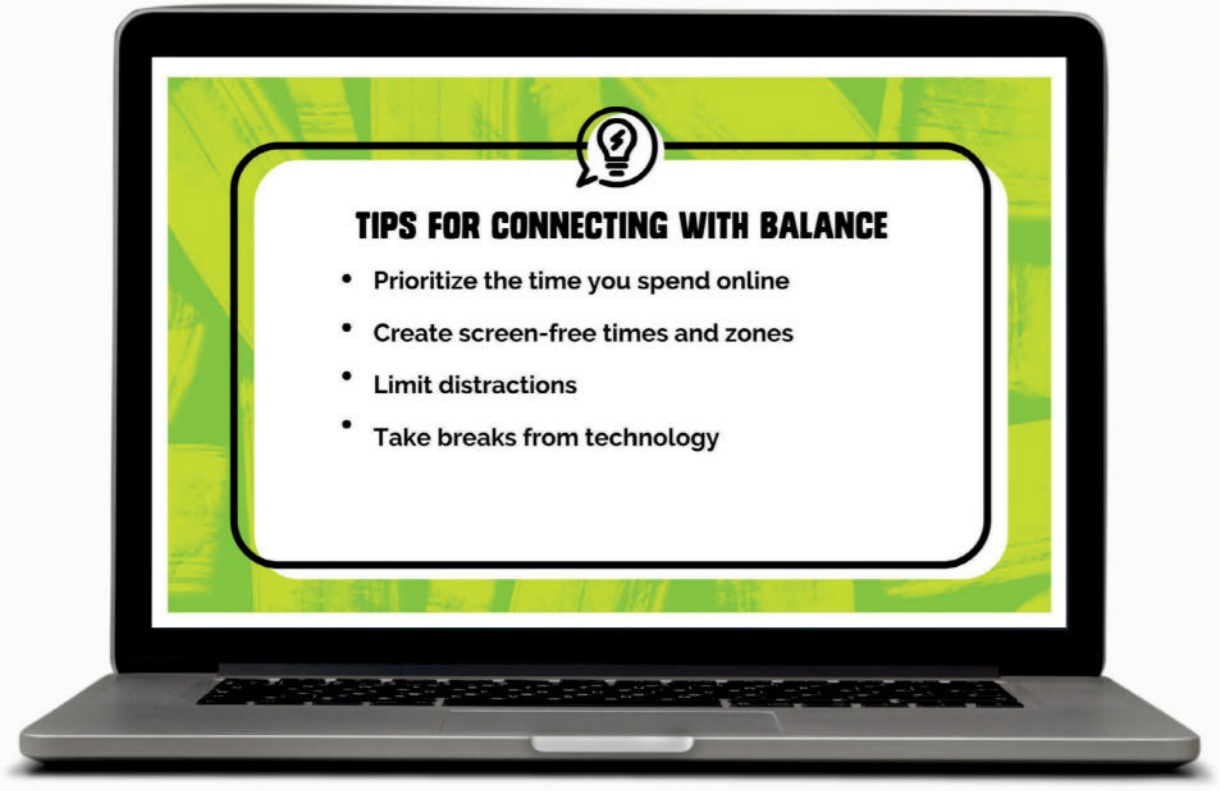
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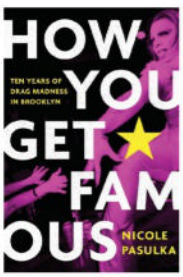

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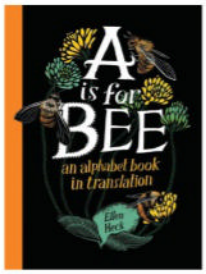

On the Cover

From *Violeta*, by Isabel Allende. This title received a starred review in the December 15, 2021 issue of *Booklist*. Cover illustration by Amanda Arlotta; cover design by Elena Giavaldi. Used by permission of Ballantine Books, a division of Penguin Random House LLC.

From the Editor & Publisher

According to the National Women's History Alliance (nationalwomenshistoryalliance.com) the theme of Women's History Month this year is "Celebrating Women Who Tell Our Stories." The Alliance notes that, "women have long been instrumental in passing on our heritage in word and in print to communicate the lessons of those who came before us. Women's stories, and the larger human story, expand our understanding and strengthen our connections with each other." I couldn't agree more and with so many of our features focused on women's fiction and the arts, this issue perfectly reflects these words. And remember that *Booklist Reader* highlights great reads for adults, youth, and audiobook fans. Don't miss "Discussable Documentaries" recommended for teens (p.18). Check out our fun and visually engaging Book Map (p.24) and Book Hooks for younger audiences (p.32); this month we highlight books about the big screen. No matter your age, interests, or reading preferences, we've got you covered!

—George Kendall
gkendall@ala.org

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Top 10

Women's Fiction

The Top 10 women's fiction titles explore relationships of all stripes—friends, partners, mothers, and children—in slyly funny, deeply poignant, and page-turningly suspenseful ways.

A Conspiracy of Mothers. By Colleen van Niekerk. 2021. Amazon/Little A.

In 1994 South Africa, Ingrid and her mother, Yolanda, are forced to face the truth about Ingrid's father—he's white, making his affair with Yolanda against the law.

Cover Story. By Susan Rigetti. 2022. Morrow.

NYU student Lora falls under the spell of Cat Wolff, a big-spending socialite who is not what she seems in a winning combination of *The Devil Wears Prada* and *Gone Girl*.

Home or Away. By Kathleen West. 2022. Berkley.

West's nuanced, heartfelt novel portrays Leigh, who nearly had a spot on the U.S. Olympic Women's Hockey Team, and her nine-year-old son, Gus, who is obsessed with the sport.

The Intangible. By C. J. Washington. 2022. Amazon/Little A.

Amanda has recently miscarried, but her body still believes that she's pregnant, a rare condition studied by renowned scientist Patrick, leading to many insights into family, faith, academia, marriage, and love.

A Novel Obsession. By Caitlin Barasch. 2022. Dutton.

Aspiring writer Naomi Ackerman has fallen hard for her Welsh boyfriend, Caleb, but she can't help but insert herself into his ex-girlfriend Rosemary's life, all in the name of research for her first novel.

Pack Up the Moon. By Kristan Higgins. 2021. Berkley.

Lauren Park, diagnosed with a terminal lung disease, writes letters to her husband, who is on the autism spectrum, with assignments to help him thrive after she's gone.

The Things We Lost. By Maggie Giles. 2022. Rising Action.

Maddie put her past behind her after the mysterious death of her best friend, Gina. One night, she drifts off to sleep only to wake up ten years earlier, with no husband or children and Gina still alive.

We Are Not like Them. By Christine Pride and Jo Piazza. 2021. Atria.

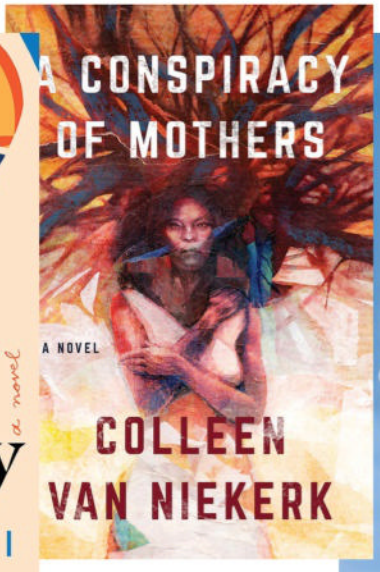
In this spellbinding novel, the lifelong friendship between reporter Riley, who is Black, and cop's wife Jen, who is white, is thrown into turmoil in the aftermath of the shooting of an unarmed Black teenager by the Philadelphia police.

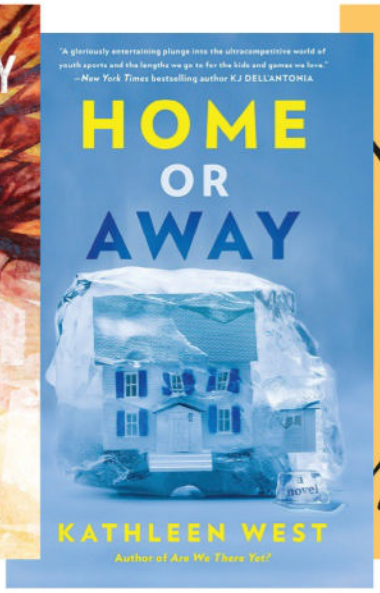
Wildcat. By Amelia Morris. 2022. Flatiron.

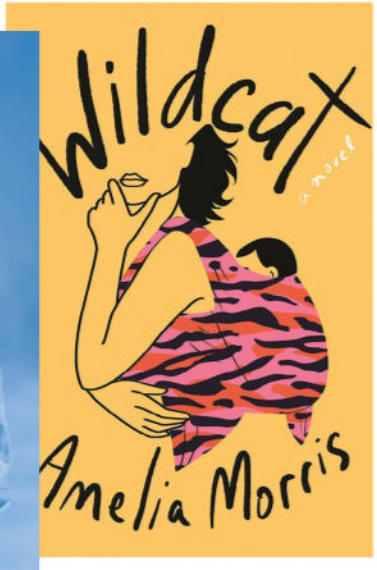
Leanne Hazelton is just a regular new mom, except that the ghost of her father talks to her, and she is slowly realizing that her best friend is no friend at all, leading to Morris' exploration of the ebbs and flows of female friendship.

Wish You Were Here. By Jodi Picoult. 2021. Ballantine.

Art specialist Diana O'Toole arrives on the Gálapagos Islands in 2020 just as the world shuts down during the global COVID-19 crisis. While her surgeon boyfriend endures horrors in New York, Diana grows close to a teenager with abandonment issues and her handsome father.







Art from *Erotic Stories for Punjabi Widows*.

The Essentials

Immigration and Belonging in Women's Fiction

by Susan Maguire

Being the child of immigrants can be an exercise in managing expectations: of an often close-knit community, of traditional gender roles, of a society that looks at immigrants with prejudice. These recent books, featuring immigrants or first-generation main characters—of all genders—explore these issues alongside the staples of relationship fiction: friendship, romantic partnerships, and finding one's place in the world. Though the tones vary widely from laugh-out-loud funny to tender and somber, the stories share the theme of finding the balance between tradition and modern life.

MADI SINHA
Author of The White Coat Diaries
AT LEAST YOU HAVE YOUR HEALTH
A NOVEL
"Scorchingly honest, funny, and poignant."
—ELYSSA FRIEDLAND, author of Last Summer at the Golden Hotel
NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER
THE LAST STORY OF MINA LEE
REESE'S BOOK CLUB
A NOVEL
NANCY JOOYOUN KIM

All the Lonely People. By Mike Gayle. 2021. Grand Central.

Eighty-two-year-old Hubert Bird is a Jamaican immigrant who has called Great Britain home for almost 60 years. To save his daughter from worry, he has created a fictional social life, but when she schedules a visit, he must rustle up some actual friends in this heartwarming story.

At Least You Have Your Health. By Madi Sinha. 2022. Berkley.

Maya Rao is considering leaving Philadelphia General Hospital for a position as the gynecologist at a boutique medical practice, but when the opportunity begins to prove too good to be true, Maya must decide what part of the American dream she actually wants.

Erotic Stories for Punjabi Widows. By Balli Kaur Jaswal. 2017. HarperCollins.

Nikki takes a part-time job at her gurdwara, teaching mostly illiterate Sikh widows with limited interest in learning their ABCs yet eager to share stories about the sensual lives they imagine beyond rigid cultural expectations of near-silent invisibility.

Fiona and Jane. By Jean Chen Ho. 2022. Viking.

Fiona and Jane are two Taiwanese American girls from broken immigrant families, and despite living on opposite

coasts, their friendship remains unbreakable. In this tender and timeless debut, Chen Ho explores the intimate facets of female friendship and the debilitating power of family traumas.

The Last Story of Mina Lee. By Nancy Jooyoun Kim. 2020. Park Row.

Kim's haunting and heartbreaking debut travels in time from 2014, when Margot Lee discovers her mother, Mina, has died alone in her tiny apartment, to 1986, when Mina fled North Korea, settling in Los Angeles as an undocumented immigrant and single mother.

Like Wind against Rock. By Nancy Kim. 2021. Amazon/Lake Union.

Soon-to-be divorced Alice moves back in with her mother, who is not acting like a typical Korean widow. When Alice finds a notebook written in Korean among her father's things, she asks a neighbor to translate it, though he warns her that she may find the contents traumatic.

Serena Singh Flips the Script. By Sonya Lalli. 2021. Berkley.

When her younger sister gets married first, advertising creative director Serena is relieved to let go of the mantle of "good Indian girl." But with all of her friends marrying and starting families, her single life is getting lonelier.

Sophia of Silicon Valley. By Anna Yen. 2018. Morrow.

Sophia deals with her overprotective Taiwanese immigrant parents and a demanding Silicon Valley job, and she longs to find a partner who isn't intimidated by either. Debut novelist Yen provides an insider's look into the craziness of the tech industry while still keeping it light.

The Taste of Ginger. By Mansi Shah. 2022. Amazon/Lake Union.

Preeti Desai is a millennial immigrant assimilated into American culture despite her mother's desire for her to be a "good Indian daughter." When a family tragedy beckons Preeti back to India, she feels like a foreigner in her home country until she starts to reconnect with her Indian side.

White Ivy. By Susie Yang. 2020. Simon & Schuster.

When Ivy is thrust into high society, she convinces everyone she belongs until someone from her past threatens her picturesque lifestyle. Yang's dark, spellbinding debut gives insight into the immigrant experience and life in the upper class, challenging the stereotypes and perceptions associated with both.

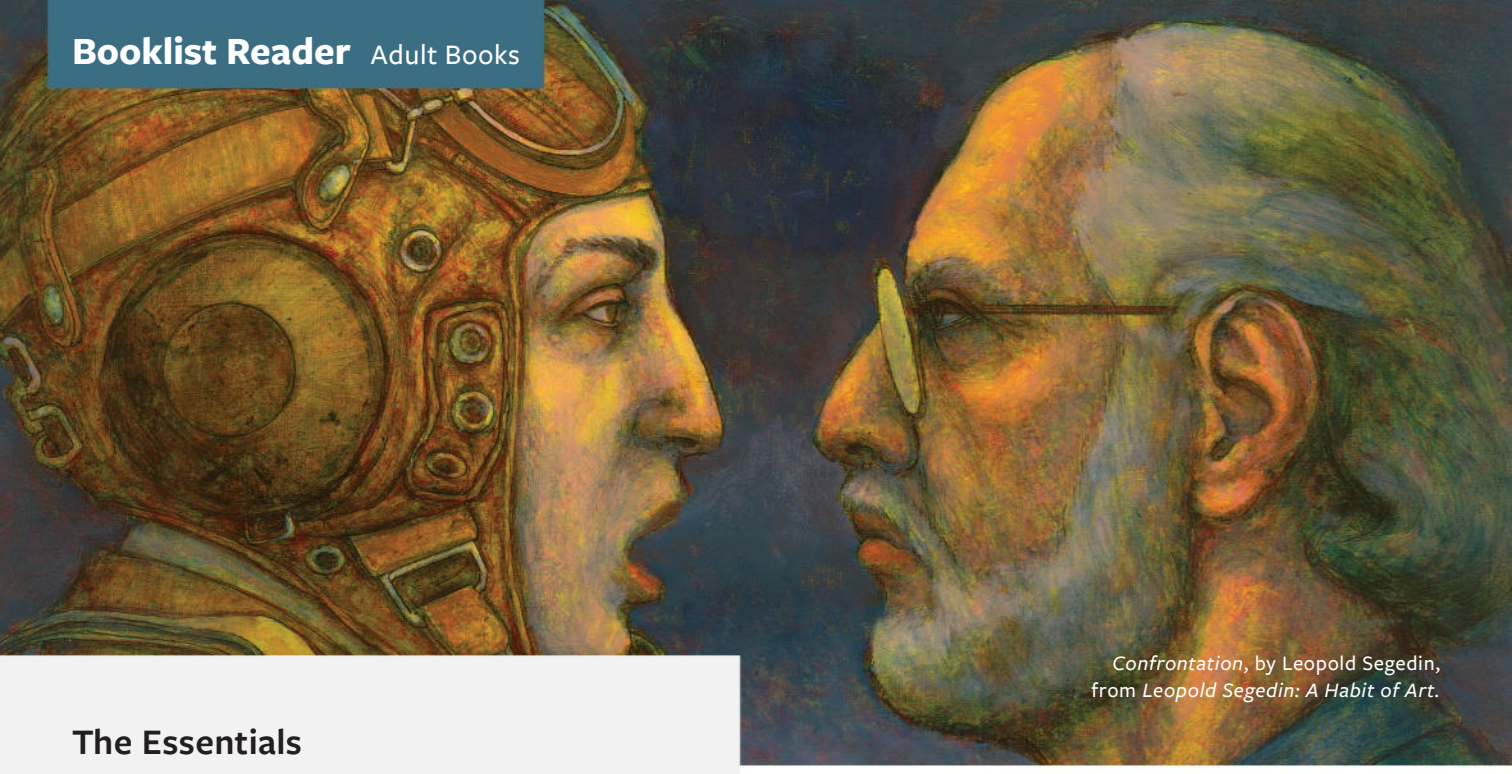
Would I Lie to You? By Aliya Ali-Afzal. 2022. Grand Central.

Faiza is as fabulous as the other mothers in London's Wimbledon Village, until her husband loses his job and she's forced to recover their emergency funds—funds that she spent. She navigates the worries of her Pakistani immigrant parents and grapples with racism from other mothers in this suspenseful novel on marriage and morality.

Yinka, Where Is Your Huzband? By Lizzie Damilola Blackburn. 2022. Pamela Dorman.

Yinka Oladeji is proud of the successful and happy life that she's made for herself, but the women of her sprawling British Nigerian family only see an unmarried woman. When her friend gets engaged, she devises a plan to find a date for the wedding in this laugh-out-loud story of self-discovery.

Art from *The Taste of Ginger*.



Confrontation, by Leopold Segedin, from *Leopold Segedin: A Habit of Art*.

The Essentials

Chicago Art

by Donna Seaman

When it comes to the arts, Chicago may be synonymous with music, theater, and architecture, but it has always also been a hub for the visual arts with vibrant and provocative artists, cutting-edge galleries, and world-class museums. These image-rich books illuminate key aspects of the city's unique artistic energy and splendor both brash and beautiful.

Art in Chicago: A History from the Fire to Now. Ed. by Maggie Taft and Robert Cozzolino. 2018. Univ. of Chicago.

Art historians Taft and Cozzolino and their expert contributors illuminate multiple dimensions of the Chicago art world, emphasizing the insurgent use of art**,** including Black and Latinx street murals, as a force for dissent, social change, and community improvement. The many artists spotlighted include Archibald Motley Jr., Ray Yoshida, Christina Ramberg, and Roger Brown, and current luminaries Nick Cave, Theaster Gates, Faheem Majeed, Diane Simpson, Amanda Williams, and Kerry James Marshall. For more on Marshall, see *Kerry James Marshall: Mastry*, by Ivan Alteveer and others.

Charles White: A Retrospective. Ed. by Sarah Kelly Oehler and Esther Adler. 2018. Yale.

Charles White (1918–79), was enthralled by the illustrated books he read as a child at the Chicago Public Library and quickly demonstrated his own phenomenal artistic talent, ultimately creating unique and arresting portraits, monumental and masterful drawings that profoundly engage with Black history and the realities of African American life.

Hairy Who? 1966–1969. Ed. by Thea Liberty Nichols and others. 2018. Yale.

What is the Hairy Who? A group of six Chicago artists—Jim Falconer, Art Green, Gladys Nilsson, Jim Nutt, Suellen Rocca, and Karl Wirsum—who studied at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and created meticulously crafted, frenetically irreverent, circusy, and reverberate images instigated by vulgarity, pop culture, and fine art traditions.

A Home for Surrealism: Fantastic Painting in Midcentury Chicago. By Janine Mileaf and Susan F. Rossen. 2018. Univ. of Chicago.

For the eight Chicago painters showcased here—Gertrude Abercrombie, Ivan Albright, Eldzier Cortor, Julio de Diego, Harold Noecker, Dorothea Tanning, Julia Thecla, and John Wilde—the "real" turned surreal as they forged a spectrum of audacious styles, moods, and inventive variations on home, longing, war, displacement, and women's lives.

It's Life as I See It: Black Cartoonists in Chicago, 1940–1980. By Charles Johnson and Ronald Wimberly. Ed. by Dan Nadel. 2021. NYRC.

This zesty anthology fills a gaping hole in the history of American cartooning by portraying nine seminal Black cartoonists and presenting examples of their creative,

incisive, and socially eviscerating cartoons and comic strips. Each succinct biography is compelling, and the observational and narrative comics are potent, from Seitu Hayden's *Waliku,* which captures the wisdom of children and the heavy burdens on Black families, to Jay Johnson's *Bungleton Green and the Mystic Commandos*, a 1944 time-machine tale that envisions a future America in which white people are "Jim Crowed" by green people; Jackie Ormes' stylish and lacerating *Patty-Jo 'n' Ginger;* and Turtel Onli's ventures into Afrofuturism.

Leopold Segedin: A Habit of Art. By Leopold Segedin. Ed. by Paul Segedin and Benjamin Segedin. 2018. Outbound Ike.

Not only was Leopold Segedin born and raised on the West Side, Chicago is his muse and subject, from the view from the El to the expressiveness of old brick. Essays place Segedin within Chicago's socially conscious figurative tradition, chronicle his participation in the American Jewish Artists Club and the founding of the artists cooperative Exhibit A, and pinpoint primary themes, while the artist himself, a longtime art professor, offers warmly elucidating and candid commentary alongside resplendent large color plates of his spellbinding works.

My Love Affair with Modern Art: Behind the Scenes with a Legendary Curator. By Katharine Kuh. 2006. Arcade.

Kuh valiantly brought Chicago into the modern-art era, opening a gallery to exhibit such pioneers as Kandinsky and Klee as well as Chicago artists and becoming the first curator of modern art at the Art Institute of Chicago.

South Side Venus: The Legacy of Margaret Burroughs. By Mary Ann Cain. 2018. Northwestern Univ. Pr.

A pillar in Chicago arts and activism, Margaret Burroughs (1915–2010), whose family fled Klan violence in Louisiana in 1922, believed that one should contribute to the "collective well-being" of one's community, and that art was a "means to connect with others." A gifted and prolific artist and writer, Burroughs was also a high-school teacher, tenured professor, curator, activist, and primary founder of the DuSable Museum of African American History.

Vivian Maier Developed: The Untold Story of the Photographer Nanny. By Ann Marks. 2021. Atria.

The enigmatic Vivian Maier (1926–2009), her exceptional photographs, and the controversies ignited by the discovery and dissemination of her work have been explored in previous books, a spate of articles and social-media posts, and two "dueling" documentaries. Marks enters the arena with a biography built on zealously assiduous research, illuminating in fresh detail the many facets of Maier's unusual life, from her fractured family and youth in New York City and the French Alps to her covert creative quest in Chicago while supporting herself by working as a nanny. Nearly 400 of Maier's stunning, witty, and unnerving photographs are presented along with insights into the "fearless" and consummate photographer as a "fervent advocate for civil rights," an "ardent feminist," and artist who "sought to capture the reality of the human condition with an absolute absence of judgment."

Unite, by Barbara Jones-Hogu, from *Art in Chicago: A History from the Fire to Now.*

Lady Justice or Themis (God of Justice) isolated on black background: icedmocha / Adobe Stock.

Read-alikes

Quests for Truth and Justice

By Donna Seaman

Cheryl A. Head's novel, *Time's Undoing*, creatively explores the personal repercussions of racism and racist violence in Birmingham, Alabama, in both the present and the Jim Crow era, weaving these time frames together in a captivating and dramatic quest for facts and understanding undertaken by Meghan McKenzie, a young Detroit-based journalist who gradually discerns a bit of subtle otherworldly guidance. The novels below cover similar ground from equally compelling perspectives.

Bombingham. By Anthony Grooms. 2001. One World.

As a group of Black soldiers treks across a rice field during the Vietnam War, banter about home triggers memories for Walter Burke of growing up in Birmingham, Alabama, which was dubbed "Bombingham" for the infamous Sixteenth Street Baptist Church bombing and other acts of terrorism by the Ku Klux Klan.

Into the Go-Slow. By Bridgett M. Davis. 2014. Feminist.

Recent college graduate Angie Mackenzie is working as a sales-clerk in Detroit in 1986 when she decides to trace the path of her late sister Ella, an activist who went to Nigeria and became a feminist journalist, an enlightening journey that allows Angie to find her way forward.

Gathering of Waters. By Bernice L. McFadden. 2012. Akashic.

The Hilson family flees the race riots of Tulsa, Oklahoma, for Money, Mississippi; in 1955, Tass Hilson falls in love with visiting Emmett Till, who is brutally murdered. Traumatized, she eventually moves to Detroit, but returns to Money and its troubled spirits years later.

Grace. By Natashia Deon. 2016. Counterpoint.

Naomi, an enslaved 17-year-old in Alabama, is killed moments after giving birth to her daughter, Josey, then lingers as a spirit, telling her story in flashbacks and that of her mixed-race daughter before, during, and after emancipation.

Grant Park. By Leonard Pitts. 2015. Bolden.

The state of U.S. race relations in 1968 and 2008 is seen through the eyes of two veteran Chicago newsmen, one Black and one white, who run afoul of their newspaper, resulting in the former being snatched by two white supremacists intending to set off a bomb in Grant Park during President Obama's acceptance speech.

The Kid. By Sapphire. 2011. Penguin.

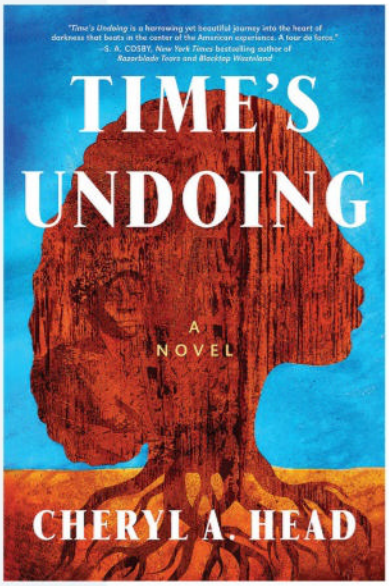
Abdul Jones' agonized quest for identity after the death of his mother, Precious, from Sapphire's novel *Push* (1996) and the celebrated movie, *Precious*, involves a marathon of abuse in foster care and a Catholic orphanage, resulting in acute suffering Sapphire connects to the legacy of slavery and Jim Crow in powerful, often hallucinatory prose.

The Nickel Boys. By Colson Whitehead. 2019. Doubleday.

There were rumors about Nickel Academy, a Florida reform school, but survivors kept their traumas to themselves until, decades later, a university archaeology student

Time's Undoing. By Cheryl A. Head. 2023. Dutton.

Head, the award-winning author of the Charlie Mack Motown mystery featuring a Black, female, queer PI, brings her gift for strong women protagonists and suspense to this tale about a young, Black, female journalist from Detroit on a dangerous quest. In 1929, a Black master carpenter, Robert Lee Harrington, is killed in Birmingham, Alabama. In 2019, his great-granddaughter, Meghan McKenzie, decides to go to Birmingham to hunt down the hidden truth about Harrington's life and unsolved murder. Head charts every step in Meghan's Birmingham investigation, from her gutsy, seemingly fated research to her finding friends and allies, including a Black woman activist, a white librarian destined to make painful discoveries about her family, and a distractingly sexy Black man working in the mayor's social justice office. Harrington's harrowing story of Jim Crow racism and violence is equally vivid and affecting. After being forced to leave Florida, he has finally brought his beautiful pregnant wife and their young daughter to Birmingham only to have trouble hunt him down one final time. As threats intensify against Meghan, Head dramatizes the ongoing horrors of white supremacy, police brutality, and the "conspiracy of hate," but she also spotlights the way people come together to fight for justice. This heart-seizing tale even has a touch of the supernatural as it celebrates Black lives. —*Donna Seaman*



discovers a secret graveyard. Whitehead rolls back time to the last vicious years of Jim Crow when two African American teens, Elwood and Turner, end up at Nickel, where the Black boys are barely fed, classes are a travesty, and the threat of sexual abuse and torture is endemic.

A Taste of Honey. By Jabari Asim. 2010. Crown.

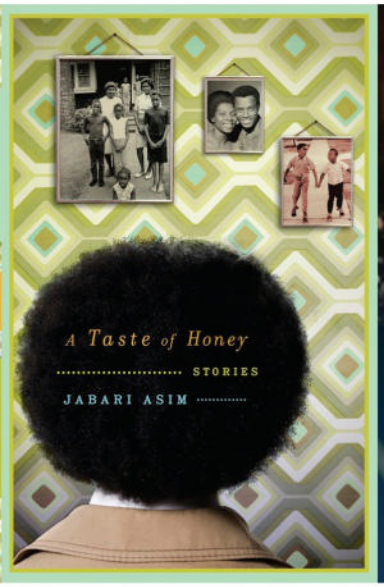
In 1967 in the fictional Midwestern town of Gateway City, the tight-knit Black community is grappling with changes large and small against the backdrop of boiling white resentment over integration and ongoing racial injustice and police brutality.

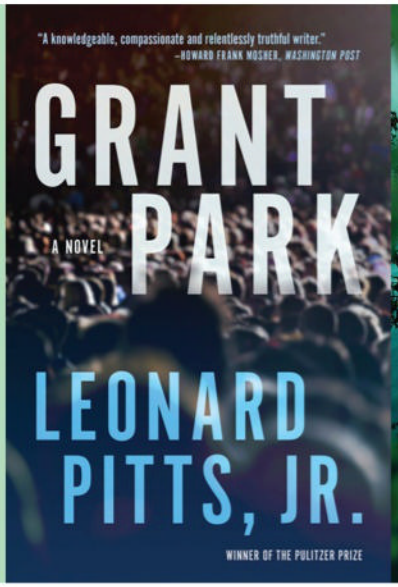
The Tragedy of Brady Sims. By Ernest J. Gaines. 2017. Vintage.

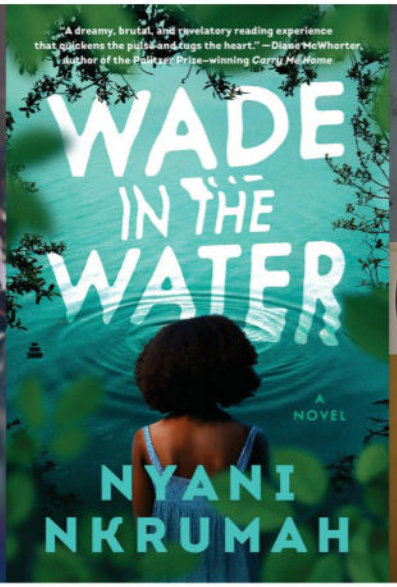
Gaines draws on his Jim Crow Louisiana childhood in this tale of a New Orleans cub reporter who arrives at a small-town courtroom just in time to see Brady Sims shoot the defendant, then heads to the barbershop where he learns the story of all the suffering that led to that shattering act.

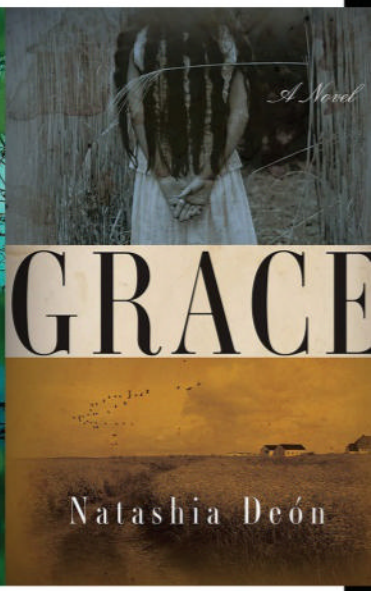
Wade in the Water. By Nyani Nkrumah. 2023. Amistad.

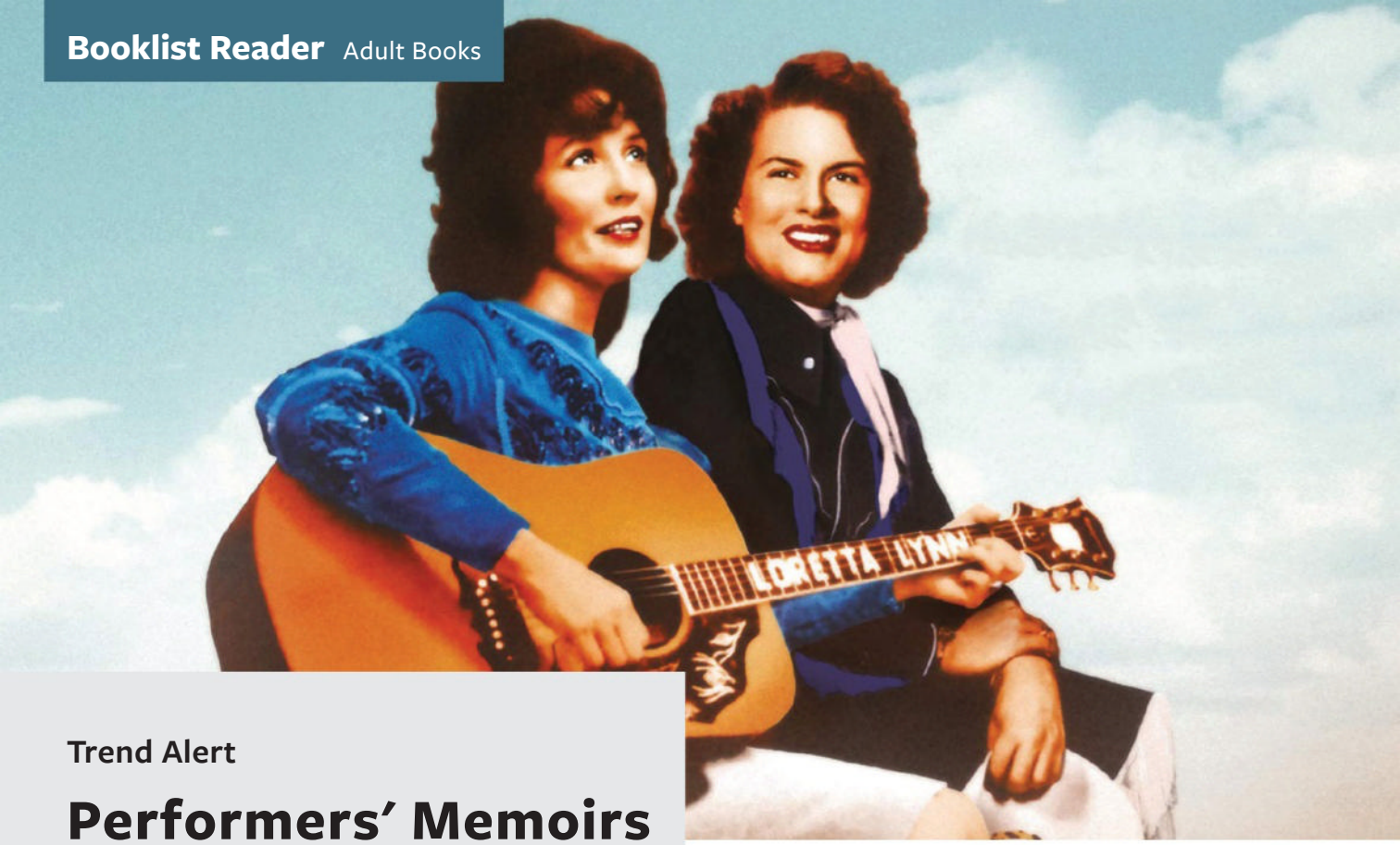
Ella is a 12-year-old Black girl living in Ricksville, Mississippi, in 1982. Katherine St. James is a white Princeton graduate student who grew up nearby, the daughter of a dedicated Klan member. Twenty years later, Katherine comes to Ricksville while working her thesis and she and Ella become friends.




"A knowledgeable, compassionate and relentlessly truthful writer."
—HOWARD FRANK MOSHER, WASHINGTON POST
GRANT PARK
A NOVEL
LEONARD PITTS, JR.
WINNER OF THE PULITZER PRIZE


"A dreamy, brutal, and revelatory reading experience that quickens the pulse and tugs the heart." —Diane McWhorter, author of the Pulitzer Prize–winning Carry Me Home
WADE IN THE WATER
A NOVEL
NYANI NKRUMAH





Art from *Me & Patsy Kickin' Up Dust.*

Trend Alert

Performers' Memoirs

by Donna Seaman

These famous and magnetic performers candidly and often wittily share stories of their private struggles and celebrity lives, offering advice and hope, along with a poet-critic who blends memoir with performing-arts history.

Apparently There Were Complaints. By Sharon Gless. 2021. Simon & Schuster.

Actor Gless wryly recounts her five decades in Hollywood, including her pioneering roles in *Cagney & Lacey* and *Queer as Folk*, sharing her early family life, struggles with her weight and addiction, friendships, and love.

Finding Me. By Viola Davis. 2022. HarperOne.

The first African American actress to achieve an Academy Award, an Emmy, and two Tony Awards, Davis reveals how she dealt with poverty, abuse, and racism and discovered that acting helped her release her trauma.

From Staircase to Stage: The Story of Raekwon and the Wu-Tang Clan. By Raekwon and Anthony Bozza. 2021. Gallery.

Raekwon the Chef, a founding member of the Wu Tang Clan and revolutionary solo artist, tells the unvarnished truth about his life growing up on Staten Island in a story of perseverance, discovery, and vision.

Hello, Molly! By Molly Shannon and Sean Wilsey. 2022. Ecco.

Shannon, who was just four years old when her mother, little sister, and cousin died in a car accident, reveals how her fearlessness and impish sense of humor, plus her Catholic upbringing, led to her developing some of her beloved characters in this touching and hilarious memoir.

Last Chance Texaco: Chronicles of an American Troubadour. By Rickie Lee Jones. 2021. Grove.

Grammy-winning Rickie Lee Jones explains that her life has not been as polished as her music as she describes her rootless childhood as the granddaughter of vaudeville performers, struggles as a teenage runaway, battles with drugs, and devotion to creativity.

A Little Devil in America: Notes in Praise of Black Performance. By Hanif Abdurraqib. 2021. Random.

Carnegie Medal–winner Abdurraqib delves into many iterations of Black artistic expression, including the trailblazing performances of Josephine Baker, while also illuminating personal experiences and reflections.

Me & Patsy Kickin' Up Dust: My Friendship with Patsy Cline. By Loretta Lynn and Patsy Lynn. 2020. Grand Central.

Lynn's countless fans will be delighted to find that she writes the way she talks in this warm and frank mem-

oir that's mostly about her all-too-brief but sister-close friendship with Patsy Cline, but also about her turbulent marriage and sexism in the country music business.

Playing with Myself. By Randy Rainbow. 2022. St. Martin's.

Rainbow (that is his real name) rose to viral video fame through roasting the Trump administration via parody songs and skits, and in his first memoir, which is pure, indulgent fun, he drops names and tells tales with his signature sunny wit.

Split Decision: Life Stories. By Ice-T and others. 2022. Gallery.

Ice-T, famous rapper, actor, and producer, teams up with his former partner-in-theft, Spike, in this dual memoir of growing up in L.A., turning to crime, and living two intertwined yet very different existences as Ice-T ultimately devoted himself to rap while Spike continued to execute jewelry-store heists with dire consequences.

Trejo: My Life of Crime, Redemption, and Hollywood. By Danny Trejo. 2021. Atria.

Danny Trejo, an actor with some 250 roles to his credit in movies, television, and video games, often besieged and bloodied, tells his remarkable life story of violence, sorrow, addiction, survival, and fame.

Walking in My Joy: In These Streets. By Jenifer Lewis. 2022. Amistad.

Jenifer Lewis, star of *Black-ish* and *I Love That for You* and author of the best-selling *Mother of Black Hollywood* (2017), presents a thought-provoking and inspiring memoir about growing up poor, becoming a voter-rights activist, dealing with COVID-19, being scammed, embracing life in her mid-sixties, and learning how to walk in joy.

Year of the Monkey. By Patti Smith. 2019. Knopf.

In her third memoir, National Book Award–winner Smith writes with fresh lucidity, arch wit, bittersweet wonder, and stoic sorrow about turning 70 in a year of dark politics, meditative wanderings, haunting memories, wrenching loss, disorienting dreams, surreal visions, and grace.

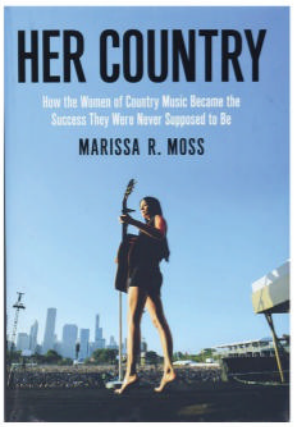
You Got Anything Stronger? By Gabrielle Union. 2021. Morrow/Dey St.

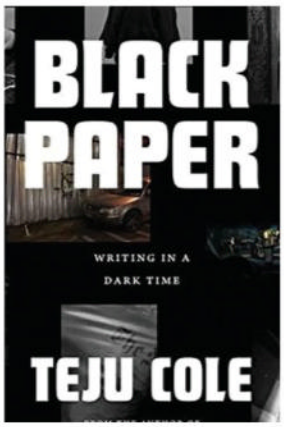
Following the success of *We're Going to Need More Wine* (2017), actress Union returns with more wise, intimate personal stories, sharing her experiences with infertility, having her daughter via surrogate, and her role as stepparent, particularly for her and basketball star Dwayne Wade's transgender teenage daughter, while also dishing out plenty of Hollywood lore and good advice.

Top 10

Arts Books

Painting, music, film, and drag performances are all explored from fresh, dynamic, and social-justice-oriented perspectives in these exceptional recent art books.





Black Paper: Writing in a Dark Time. By Teju Cole. 2021. Univ. of Chicago.

In his astute essays, writer and photographer Cole aligns art with the world's tragedies as he considers Caravaggio, Kerry James Marshall, and Blackness in Africa and America.

Camera Man: Buster Keaton, the Dawn of Cinema, and the Invention of the Twentieth Century. By Dana Stevens. 2022. Atria.

Stevens insightfully aligns ingenious and daring Buster Keaton's kinetic cinematic artistry with the velocity of innovation and change that propelled the twentieth century.

Colorization: One Hundred Years of Black Films in a White World. By Wil Haygood. 2021. Knopf.

In this captivating chronicle, Haygood reveals how entwined Black film is with American history as he tracks cinematic Black stereotypes, the struggles of directors Oscar Micheaux and Spike Lee, Blaxploitation, and the power of independent video.

Declassified: A Low-Key Guide to the High-Strung World of Classical Music. By Arianna Warsaw-Fan Rauch. 2022. Putnam.

Violinist Warsaw-Fan Rauch transforms the seemingly enigmatic, even exclusionary world of classical music into a dazzling, hilarious, and uniquely awe-inspiring reading and listening adventure.

Her Country: How the Women of Country Music Became the Success They Were Never Supposed to Be. By Marissa R. Moss. 2022. Holt.

Nashville journalist Moss takes an inside look at the feminist revolution in country music via current working artists Mickey Guyton, Maren Morris, and Kacey Musgraves.

Art from *Colorization*.

Hollywood: The Oral History. By Jeanine Basinger and Sam Wasson. 2022. Harper.

Basinger and Wasson dug into the extensive conversations with more than 3,000 movie people preserved by the American Film Institute to create a veritable Who's Who of Hollywood past and present.

How You Get Famous: Ten Years of Drag Madness in Brooklyn. By Nicole Pasulka. 2022. Simon & Schuster.

Authentically recording the personal and sociopolitical realities of drag in Brooklyn from 2011 to 2021, Pasulka preserves the people, places, and evolving culture that made drag famous.

King of the Blues: The Rise and Reign of B. B. King. By Daniel de Visé. 2021. Grove/Atlantic.

De Visé chronicles King's rough childhood, how music saved his life, and how he developed his own singular guitar-playing style, setting King's story within the complexities of his time.

Making a Scene. By Constance Wu. 2022. Scribner.

In this gorgeous memoir of a life guided by passion and art, Constance Wu explains that she has always felt big feelings and that acting gave her the ability to channel them, despite harassment and discrimination, into a brilliant movie career.

Winslow Homer: American Passage. By William R. Cross. 2022. Farrar.

Subtly radical artist Winslow Homer was overdue for a thorough reconsideration, which Cross provides with skill, insight, and precision, illuminating Homer's empathy and respect for those who were oppressed and deep perspective on humankind's place in nature.

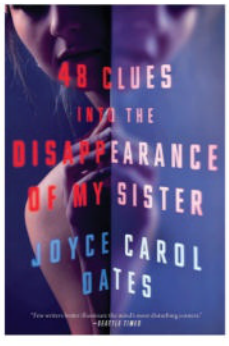
Reserve These Reads

Adult

Get your hands on these hotly anticipated books, all out this month.

Art from *Weyward*.

Fiction

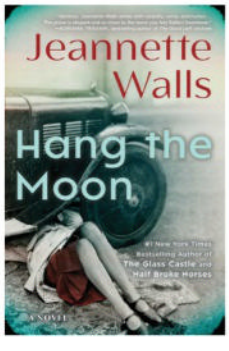


48 Clues into the Disappearance of My Sister. By Joyce Carol Oates. Mysterious.

A woman wonders where her older, prettier sister might be in Oates' latest psychological thriller.

Birnam Wood. By Eleanor Catton. Farrar.

Booker Prize–winning Catton's (*The Luminaries,* 2013) new novel follows a group of activist gardeners and the mysterious land they stumble onto.

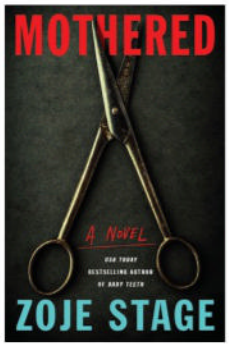


Hang the Moon. By Jeannette Walls. Scribner.

The third novel from the author of renowned memoir *The Glass Castle* introduces Sallie Kincaid, a daring young woman cast out by her bootlegger family in the early twentieth century.

I Will Find You. By Harlan Coben. Grand Central.

Coben always delivers the twists, and in his latest, a man who is serving a life sentence for murdering his son discovers that his son may still be alive.

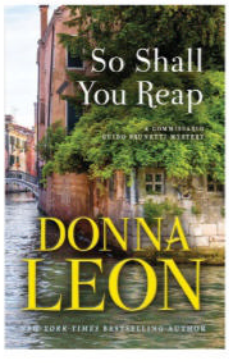


Mothered. By Zoje Stage. Thomas & Mercer.

A woman quarantining during the pandemic gets a horrifying new roommate—her mother—in this psychological thriller from the author of *Baby Teeth* (2018).

The Quarantine Princess. By Meg Cabot. Avon.

Mia Thermapolis Renaldi, Crown Princess of Genovia, is living a charmed life with her husband and toddler twins until COVID-19 strikes and she must learn to guide her people through the pandemic.



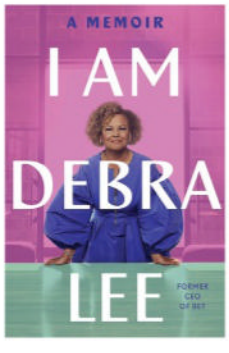
So Shall You Reap. By Donna Leon. Atlantic Monthly.

In Venice, Commissario Guido Brunetti investigates the murder of a Sri Lankan immigrant, a palazzo caretaker, discovering a surprising connection to his own youthful political activities.

Weyward. By Emilia Hart. St. Martin's.

This big-deal debut novel follows centuries of women with intuitive powers, in 2019, 1619, and 1942, exploring the ways they rise above society's treatment of them.

Nonfiction



I Am Debra Lee. By Debra Lee. Legacy Lit.

A former CEO of BET details her personal and professional life, sharing leadership advice on her journey to the top of the entertainment industry.

The Real Work: On the Mystery of Mastery. By Adam Gopnik. Norton/Liveright.

Having written about brilliant minds for decades, *New Yorker* critic Gopnik sets out to investigate how we actually learn new skills.

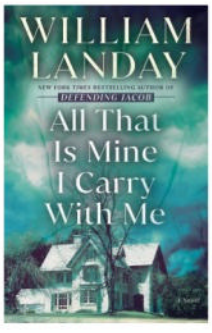
LIBRARY READS

Lone Women: A Novel
by Victor LaValle
(One World)

A homestead far from prying eyes offers Adelaide a fresh start in 1915 Montana. She makes a few female friends–after all, lone women need to stick together. But a secret that won't be contained or silenced soon threatens her new life. Horror mixed with resilient characters in complex relationships make this a must-read for fans of *A Dangerous Business* and *When Women Were Dragons*."

—Kimberly McGee, Lake Travis Community Library, Austin, TX
NoveList read-alike: *Devil's Call* by Danielle J. Dorn

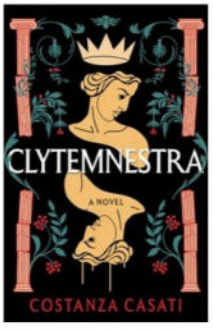
March 2023: The top ten books published this month that library staff across the country love.



All That Is Mine I Carry With Me: A Novel
by William Landay
(Ballantine)

"The Larkin siblings face years of sadness and questions after their mother disappears. Many speculate their father killed her, but he's always maintained his innocence. What is the truth? The story spans several decades and features multiple narrators, including the mother. The characters are deftly explored and are very raw and real. For readers of suspenseful fiction and family dramas."

—Cyndi Larsen, Avon Free Public Library, Avon, CT
NoveList read-alike: *It's One of Us* by J.T. Ellison



Clytemnestra: A Novel
by Costanza Casati
(Sourcebooks Landmark)

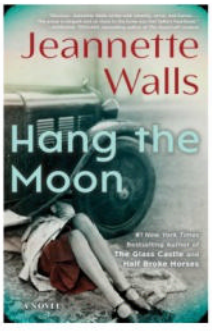
"This triumphant retelling of Greek legend traces Clytemnestra's life through her childhood in warring Sparta to her marriage and the end of the Trojan War. Casati fully fleshes out the mythical queen's character—fierce and unyielding but also soft and mournful. For readers of Madeline Miller's historical fiction."

—Magen Hill, Braswell Memorial Library, Rocky Mount, NC
NoveList read-alike: *Elektra* by Jennifer Saint

The Gospel of Orla
by Eoghan Walls
(Seven Stories Press)

"Orla manages the best she can with a little sister and an alcoholic dad, but she misses her mother, who died too soon. When she meets a man who seems to have the power of resurrection, she plans to bring him to her mother's grave, beginning a heartbreaking journey into adulthood and acceptance. Readers of this lyrical debut will wish spunky Orla all the best."

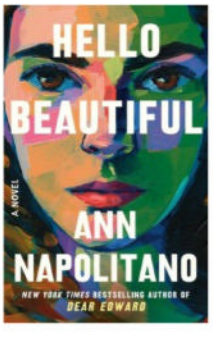
—Katharine Phenix, Boulder Public Library, Boulder, CO
NoveList read-alike: *Washington Black* by Esi Edugyan



Hang the Moon: A Novel
by Jeannette Walls
(Scribner)

"Walls' latest coming-of-age novel about love, loss, and the grey areas of the law is set in Prohibition-era small-town Virginia. This is a must-read for anyone who craves fiction that has unforgettable characters, a relatively quick pace for literary fiction, and a well-researched background. For fans of Sue Monk Kidd and Kaye Gibbons."

—Jennifer Schultz, Fauquier Public Library, Warrenton, VA
NoveList read-alike: *Over the Fence* by Mary B. Monroe



Hello Beautiful: A Novel
by Ann Napolitano
(The Dial Press)

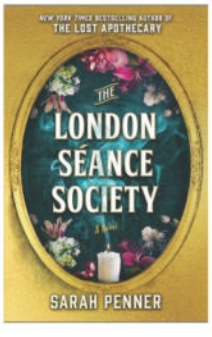
"A man's tragic past and the intersection of his relationship with the sisters of the Padavano family is at the heart of this story. Napolitano skillfully creates a believable narrative to show the effects of trauma, depression, and broken relationships on those around us. The novel has a hopeful message that is full of love."

—Michelle Williams, Carlsbad City Library, Carlsbad ,CA
NoveList read-alike: *Ask Again, Yes* by Mary Beth Keane

A House With Good Bones
by T. Kingfisher
(Tor Nightfire)

"Readers should eagerly await this phenomenal book. It's deliciously creepy with a shocking twist, but also has incredibly sweet family dynamics (not including the haunting grandmother), an excellent level of humor to balance the tension, and, as a former archaeologist, I can say it has one of the best fictional portrayals of an archaeologist that I 've come across."

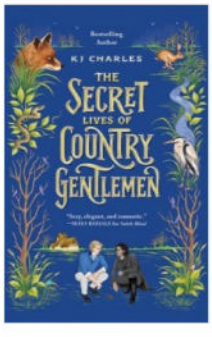
—Matthew Galloway, Anythink Libraries, Thornton, CO
NoveList read-alike: *How to Sell a Haunted House* by Grady Hendrix



The London Séance Society: A Novel
by Sarah Penner
(Park Row)

"Lenna Wickes came to Paris in 1873 to apprentice for Vaudeline D'Allaire, a renowned spiritualist. Vaudeline is called back to the London Seance Society. Lenna joins her to find out who murdered her sister Evie. Can they figure out what happened before they wind up dead too? Penner clearly researched the spiritualism movement of the Victorian era and spun a suspenseful tale."

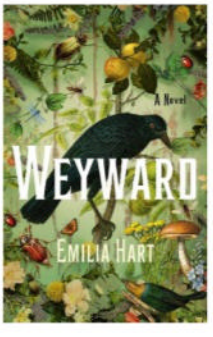
—Shari Suarez, GDL-Johnson Memorial, Genesee, MI
NoveList read-alike: *A Dreadful Splendor* by B.R. Myers



The Secret Lives of Country Gentlemen
by KJ Charles
(Sourcebooks Casablanca)

This poignant romance is an absolute joy! The story incorporates Joss's identity as a biracial Black man but doesn't make it a hurdle that the romance has to surmount. Gareth's understanding of himself, and his honesty, was really refreshing to read in a Regency. And it has been far too long since there was a landed gentry/smuggler romance!

—Dontaná McPherson-Joseph, Oak Park Public Library, Oak Park, IL
NoveList read-alike: *Soldier's Scoundrel* by Cat Sebastian



Weyward: A Novel
by Emilia Hart
(St. Martin's Press)

Men are always trying to dominate the Weyward women, but they always fail, because the Weyward women can call birds to their aid. This matriarchal clan of witches is almost broken until Kate, who stars in the most recent of the three timelines. *Practical Magic* meets Margaret Atwood in an unflinching feminist fantasy that is boiling over with rage and loaded with empowerment.

—Jill Minor, Washington County Library, Abingdon, VA
NoveList read-alike: *Hester* by Laurie Lico Albanese

Read-alikes provided by NoveList and the LibraryReads Community.

Find out more at www.LibraryReads.org

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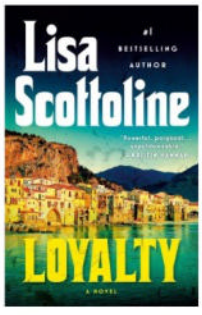
LIBRARY READS

HALL OF FAME AUTHORS

MARCH 2023

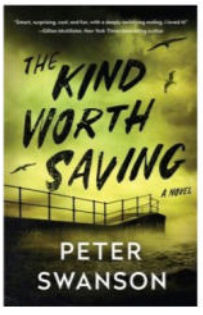
The LibraryReads Hall of Fame designation honors authors who have had multiple titles appear on the monthly LibraryReads list since 2013. When their third title places on the list via library staff votes, the author moves into the Hall of Fame.



Loyalty: A Novel
by Lisa Scottoline
(G.P. Putnam's Sons)

"Franco Fiorvanti dreams of owning his own lemon grove. Determined to secure a better future, he will do anything to prove his loyalty to the baron. When asked to kidnap a little boy, Franco makes a decision that changes his life and alters Sicily forever. It takes a bit for the main characters to come together but this quickly becomes an emotional, action-packed epic of love and justice, set during the rise of the Mafia."

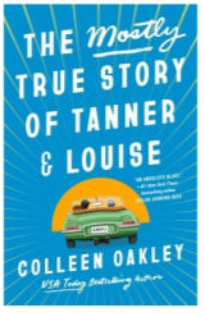
—Karen Troutman, Peru Public Library, Peru, IN
NoveList read-alike: *The Florios of Sicily* by Stefania Auci



The Kind Worth Saving
by Peter Swanson
(William Morrow)

"Henry Kimball is back—dismissed from his police job and working as a private investigator. Client Joan hires Henry to investigate her cheating husband, but as he pieces together past events, he starts to realize something else may be going on. The ending provides new insight and depth into Henry's life and relationships with lots of twists and turns for mystery readers to enjoy."

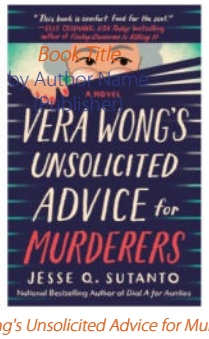
—Cari Dubiel, Twinsburg Public Library, Twinsburg, OH
NoveList read-alike: *The Golden Couple* by Greer Hendricks



The Mostly True Story of Tanner & Louise
by Colleen Oakley
(Berkley)

"After a freak accident derails Tanner's college soccer career, she moves in with Louise, an older woman whose family thinks she needs a caregiver. But there's more to Louise than Tanner expects—and when Louise's past comes to light, the two go on the lam. Great for fans of lively intergenerational fiction and *A Thousand Miles to Graceland*."

—Nanette Donohue, Champaign Public Library, Champaign, IL
NoveList read-alike: *The Summer Seekers* by Sarah Morgan



Vera Wong's Unsolicited Advice for Murderers
by Jesse Q. Sutanto
(Berkley)

"Written with wickedly sharp humor and a tightly woven plot, the book is also about the hurt that families can give and the unexpected joys of found-family. Vera is a delight as she bosses everyone around, investigating her main suspects even as she weaves bonds of friendship with and between them. Also the descriptions of the tea and food were mouthwateringly delicious!"

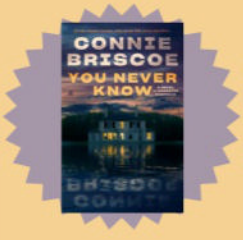
—Laura Eckert, Clermont County Public Library, Milford, OH
NoveList read-alike: *Aunty Lee's Delights* by Ovidia Yu

What Have We Done: A Novel
by Alex Finlay
(Minotaur Books)

"One night, five teenagers who grew up together in a group home commit a murder and take off into the rest of their lives. Twenty years later, they each face an assassin sent to kill them. Now the race is on to figure out who is behind the killers. This was a fantastic roller-coaster of a thriller with lots of twists and turns."

—Linda Quinn, Fairfield Public Library, Fairfield, CT
NoveList read-alike: *The Lying Game* by Ruth Ware

March 23 Bonus Pick:
(New addition to the regular list)



You Never Know: A Novel of Domestic Suspense
by Connie Briscoe
(Amistad)

Find the annotation on our social media!
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LibraryReads on Facebook and Instagram

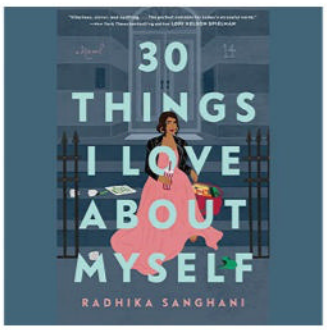
Find out more at www.LibraryReads.org/HoF

Made inLibraryAware - www.libraryaware.co

Top 10

Women's Fiction on Audio

This selection taps into the relationships women have with themselves, with each other, and with the larger world around them, all conveyed meaningfully through sensitive narrations.



30 Things I Love about Myself. By Radhika Sanghani. Read by the author. 2022. 10.5hr. Books on Tape.

Nina wakes up in jail on her thirtieth birthday and decides to make some changes, starting with loving herself better. Sanghani, with her great sense of timing, covers some profound topics beneath the book's humorous veneer.

Dear Miss Metropolitan. By Carolyn Ferrell. Read by Bahni Turpin. 2021. 11hr. Macmillan.

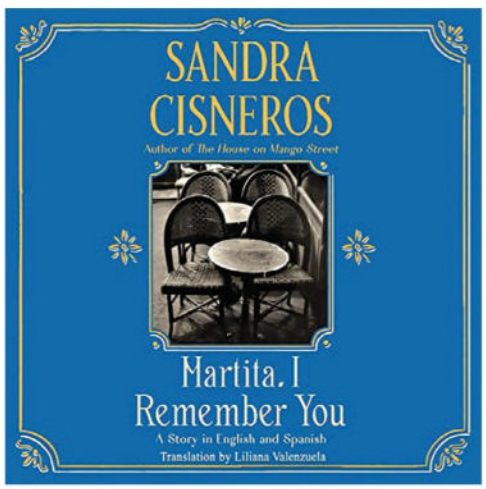
Turpin showcases her talent for accents and characterizations as she relates the story of three women held captive for over a decade and the woman across the street who was unaware of their plight.

Mary Jane. By Jessica Anya Blau. Read by Caitlin Kinnunen. 2021. 9.5hr. HarperAudio.

Young Mary Jane's pinned-down parents balk at her closeness with the young, modern couple she nannies for. Kinnunen's youthful tone captures her ebullient transformation.

Martita, I Remember You/Martita, te recuerdo. By Sandra Cisneros. Read by a full cast. 2021. 3.5hr. Books on Tape.

Author Cisneros, Sofia Leal de la Rosa, and Carlotta Brentan present this brief ode to female friendship in English and Spanish on the same recording.


SANDRA CISNEROS
Author of The House on Mango Street
Martita, I Remember You
A Story in English and Spanish
Translation by Liliana Valenzuela

One Italian Summer. By Rebecca Serle. Read by Lauren Graham. 2022. 6.5hr. Simon & Schuster Audio.

Graham's lilting voice immediately draws listeners into this time-travel novel in which a grieving daughter meets her recently deceased mother, in Italy, as she was many years ago.

Rubyfruit Jungle. By Rita Mae Brown. Read by Anna Paquin. 2022. 6.5hr. Blackstone.

The feminist and lesbian classic, a richly depicted 1970s coming-of-age story, receives insightful treatment in its first audio edition produced in honor of the novel's fiftieth anniversary.

Violeta. By Isabel Allende. Read by Yareli Arizmendi. 2022. 12hr. Books on Tape.

Arizmendi's narration and perfect pacing draw listeners in as she divulges the life of South American Violeta, whose remarkable story is bookended by two pandemics.

The Wise Women. By Gina Sorell. Read by Stacey Glemboski. 2022. 10hr. HarperAudio.

An Ann Landers–style advice columnist sweeps in to "rescue" her adult daughters in their time of need, and Glemboski's narration pinpoints all of the misperceptions and disconnections in the women's relationships with each other.

Wish You Were Here. By Jodi Picoult. Read by Marin Ireland. 2021. 12hr. Books on Tape.

Getting stuck in paradise doesn't sound so bad, but during the COVID-19 pandemic? Well, that's more complicated. Ireland's interpretation of Picoult's words is a winning performance.

We Are Not like Them. By Christine Pride and Jo Piazza. Read by a full cast. 2021. 12hr. Simon & Schuster Audio.

Riley (Shayna Small) and Jen (Marin Ireland) are friends who find themselves divided by race and alliances after a police shooting of a 14-year-old boy. Affecting performances highlight the varied perspectives.

Listen Up

Sounds like Shakespeare

by Heather Booth

There's something about Shakespeare that begs to be listened to. After listening to L.A. Theatre Works' new recording of Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead,* keep diving deeper into Shakespearean stories and sounds with these audiobooks.

Fools and Mortals. By Bernard Cornwell. Read by Thomas Judd. 2018. 10.5hr. Harper.

In this lighthearted romp through Elizabethan England, William's younger brother, Richard, is fed up with playing only women's parts. But when Will's new plays are stolen by another company, Richard sees a time to shine. Witty dialogue, distinct character voices, and brotherly tension all flow easily in Judd's narration.

Macbeth. By Jo Nesbø. Read by Euan Morton. 2018. 17.5hr. Books on Tape.

In this entry of the Hogarth Shakespeare Project, Nesbø reimagines Shakespeare's tragedy as a modern noir novel. Macbeth, in this incarnation, heads a SWAT team in Scotland. Morton's accessible Scottish accent enriches the complex text and adds to the atmosphere.

A Midsummer Night's Dream. By William Shakespeare. Performed by a full cast. 2013. 2hr. L.A. Theatre Works.

Shakespeare's most performed play is the original romantic comedy! Listen for the bawdy humor, smart banter, lovesick bewilderment, and more. Modern touches (like the rock-ballad lullaby for Titania) keep this version fresh without changing a word.

Othello. By William Shakespeare. Performed by a full cast. 2019. 3hr. Blackstone.

The Oregon Shakespeare Festival presents an accessible and moving production of what is arguably the Bard's most riveting tragedy, *Othello*. An effective score, modern sound effects, and a decidedly American presentation makes this version feel fresh and relevant to contemporary American audiences.

Verona Comics. By Jennifer Dugan. Read by a full cast. 2020. 8.5hr. Listening Library. Gr. 9–12.

Hints of *Romeo and Juliet* infuse this modern teen romance set in the world of comic-book fandom. Effective use of keyboarding and swooshing text message sounds, and a cast of gender-queer diverse characters keep this warm and tender story contemporary and relatable.

William Shakespeare's Get Thee Back to the Future! By Ian Doescher. Performed by a full cast. 2019. 3.5hr. Books on Tape.

Fans of Marty McFly and Doc Brown will delight at this Shakespeared-up version of the 1980s classic movie. The full cast convincingly impersonates *Back to the Future*'s iconic characters while also leaning into the iambic pentameter and absurdism of this romp.

Women of Will: The Performance. By Tina Packer and Nigel Gore. Read by the authors. 2021. 8hr. Alison Larkin Presents.

It's a rare pleasure to listen and learn from two people discussing something they are both so passionate and knowledgeable about. Here, Shakespearean actors Tina Packer and Nigel Gore discuss and act out scenes that show the evolution of Shakespeare's female characters.

Yorick and Bones. By Jeremy Tankard and Hermione Tankard. Read by a full cast. 2021. 5hr. HarperAudio. Gr. 2–6.

In this initial offering in a new graphic-novel series, the Tankards introduce us to Yorick, a skeleton who has just been exhumed after a few hundred years and speaks in Shakespearean iambic pentameter. Who did the digging up? A playful and hungry dog named Bones.

Art from *Othello.*

Video Watch

Discussable Documentaries for Teens & Families

by Heather Booth

Documentaries offer opportunities for deeper conversation and engagement with ideas and topics that matter to teens. These documentaries present a relatable moment: a topic of particular interest, an issue that hits at current hot topics, or a look into remarkable teen lives. Since books can extend the conversation, I've offered a few titles that can enhance dinner-table conversation or lead teens into deeper engagement with the issues.

Chasing Coral. 2017. 93m. Netflix, streaming.

When the oceans heat up, coral—a living animal—bleaches. If the oceans stay too hot, as they increasingly have been doing, the coral reefs die. This film creates an appreciation for our oceans and coral reefs, and ends with both dire warnings and notes of hope: an ideal combination for sparking conversation. The filmmakers have created a free online discussion guide.

Questions to ask

- Coral reefs aren't accessible to many people. What significant ecological features does our area have that people might not be aware of?
- The film relies on different skills from a lot of people (filmmakers, techies, communication pros, scientists, even logistical experts) to make its point. What skills of yours would you use in persuading someone to care about a topic you are passionate about?
- Do you feel differently about climate change than you did before seeing the movie? How might our family do things differently knowing what we know now from the film?

Pair with

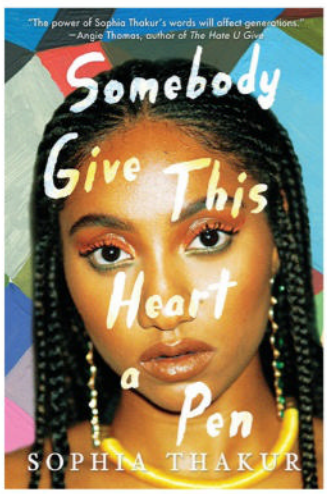
Eyes Wide Open: Going behind the Environmental Headlines. By Paul Fleischman. 2014. Candlewick. Gr. 8–12.
It's Your World: Get Informed, Get Inspired, and Get Going! By Chelsea Clinton. 2015. Philomel. Gr. 5–9.
No One Is Too Small to Make a Difference. By Greta Thunberg. 2019. Penguin. Gr. 8–12.

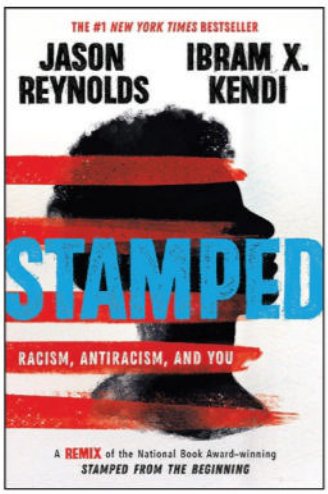
Louder Than a Bomb. 2012. 99m. Virgil Films, DVD.

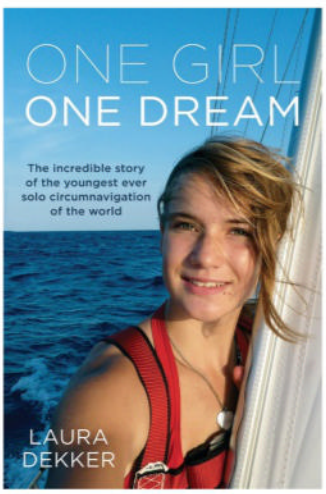
Chicago's longstanding teen slam-poetry festival (now called Rooted & Radical) is the subject of this intimate and inspiring 2012 film. Four high-school poets share the stories of their lives, their journeys as poets, and their hopes for the future. This film pairs perfectly with conversations about personal artistic expression and provides an opportunity for you to find and share the work of other young and inspiring poets like Amanda Gorman.

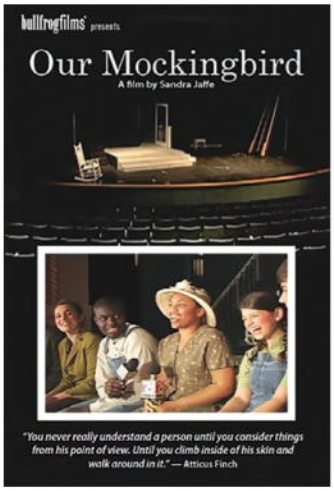
Questions to ask

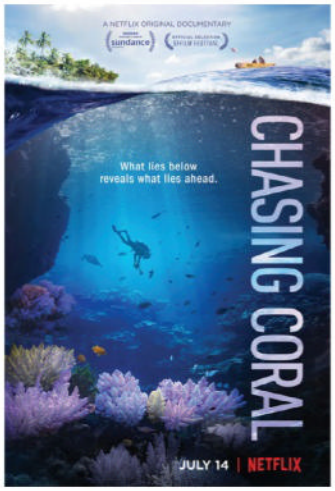
- Have you ever written poetry? What would it be like for you to have an audience for your work?
- What kind of future do you imagine for the four profiled poets, who are now adults?
- What is there to gain in putting our efforts into a passion (sports, poetry, theater, student government) during our teen years, even if we don't think we'll pursue that field later on?


"The power of Sophia Thakur's words will affect generations."
—Angie Thomas, author of The Hate U Give
Somebody Give This Heart a Pen
SOPHIA THAKUR


THE #1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER
JASON REYNOLDS
IBRAM X. KENDI
STAMPED
RACISM, ANTIRACISM, AND YOU
A REMIX of the National Book Award–winning STAMPED FROM THE BEGINNING




bullfrogfilms presents
Our Mockingbird
A film by Sandra Jaffe
"You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view. Until you climb inside of his skin and walk around in it." — Atticus Finch



Pair with

Concrete Kids. By Amyra León. Illus. by Ashley Lukashevsky. 2020. Penguin Workshop. Gr. 7–12.
Voices in the Air: Poems for Listeners. By Naomi Shihab Nye. 2018. Greenwillow. Gr. 9–12.
Somebody Give This Heart a Pen. By Sophia Thakur. 2020. Candlewick. Gr. 9–12.

Maidentrip. 2013. 82m. First Run Features, DVD.

After a court battle to become an emancipated minor, 14-year-old sailor Laura Dekker sets out be the youngest person to circumnavigate the globe. Over the next two years, she films her own journey. As she faces danger, isolation, physical challenges, and emotional trials, Laura finds that chasing her dreams on her own is a more complex and more rewarding path than she imagined. While Laura's pursuit of independence is extreme, that's what makes it so engaging and discussable.

Questions to ask

- What's the biggest and most independent thing you've done? What big, independent thing can you imagine doing at your age?
- Could Laura's story have happened to an American teen? How does our family operate differently from how teens are treated in Laura's Dutch society?
- Laura relishes her solo time aboard her ship but sometimes wishes for companionship on her adventures. Where would you like to visit solo? What kind of place would be better with a companion?

Pair with

Be Not Far from Me. By Mindy McGinnis. 2020. HarperCollins/Katherine Tegen. Gr. 8–11.
No Summit out of Sight: The True Story of the Youngest Person to Climb the Seven Summits. By Jordan Romero and Linda LeBlanc. 2014. Simon & Schuster. Gr. 5–7.
One Girl, One Dream. By Laura Dekker. 2018. HarperCollins.

Our Mockingbird. 2016. 65min. Bullfrog Films, DVD.

Two high schools in Birmingham, Alabama, prepare to perform a stage version of *To Kill a Mockingbird* together. The film follows their paths to learning about the era of the book and relating the past to their present experiences. Interviews with people from journalism, politics, and the arts are also included. This film can encourage conversation about the intersections of race, art, and culture or the gaps that remain.

Questions to ask

- Are there books you've read that you think would make good stage productions?
- How would the experience of the play have been different if the students hadn't learned about the civil rights era?
- This movie was made before the nationwide conversations about race in 2020. How might the leadup to the play and its reception be different today?

Pair with

To Kill a Mockingbird. By Harper Lee. 1960. Harper.
Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You. By Jason Reynolds and Ibram X. Kendi. 2020. Little, Brown. Gr. 7–12.
The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963. By Christopher Paul Curtis. 1995. Yearling. Gr. 4–8.

Reserve These Reads

Children & Teens

Get your hands on these hotly anticipated books, all out this month.

Older

Different for Boys. By Patrick Ness. Illus. by Tea Bendix. Candlewick/Walker. Gr. 9–12.

In award-winning Ness' experimental novel, Ant, a boy who likes boys, is struggling to navigate the turbulent waters of romance and intimacy.

Enter the Body. By Joy McCullough. Dutton. Gr. 9–12.

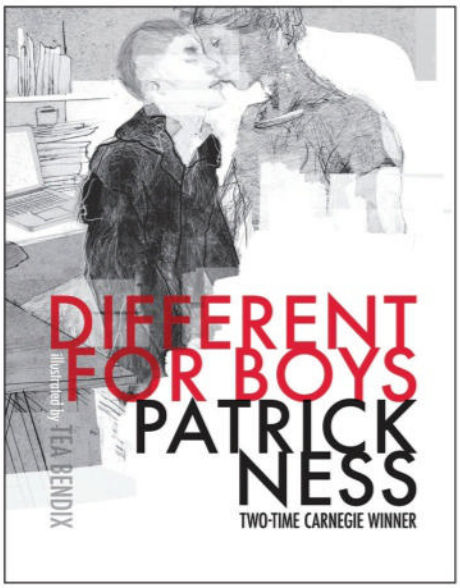
Juliet, Ophelia, and Cordelia, young women who died tragically in Shakespeare's most famous works, discuss their lives—and deaths—in this powerful novel from award-winning McCullough.

In Limbo. By Deb JJ Lee. Art by the author. First Second. Gr. 9–12.

Deborah struggles with the expectations of her mother and not finding acceptance in this meticulously drawn graphic memoir.

Into the Light. By Mark Oshiro. Tor Teen. Gr. 8–12.

Manny is living on the move and trying to find a measure of safety in this twisty mystery from award-winning Oshiro.



A Long Stretch of Bad Days. By Mindy McGinnis. HarperCollins/Katherine Tegan. Gr. 9–12.

Two teen girls from very different backgrounds start a podcast examining a tumultuous period in their tiny town's history—which includes an unsolved murder.

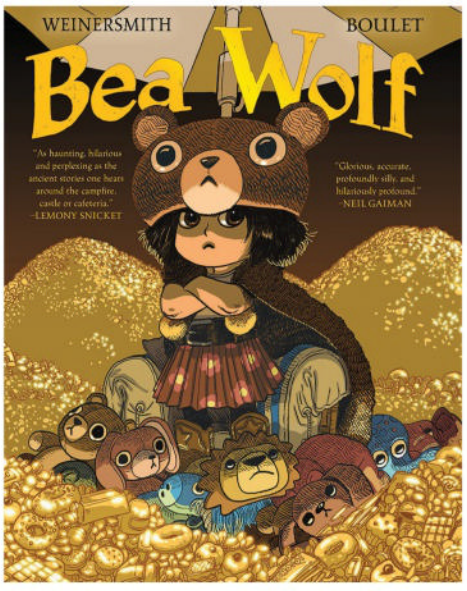
The Sinister Booksellers of Bath. By Garth Nix. Mar. HarperCollins/Katherine Tegen. Gr. 9–12.

In this sequel to 2020's *Left-Handed Booksellers of London*, a sorcerous map takes a trio of booksellers beyond their world, where they must find a way to stop an ancient magical force.

Stars and Smoke. By Marie Lu. Roaring Brook. Gr. 9–12.

Best-selling Lu drops global popstar Winter into a covert spy operation, and sparks start to fly between the performer and his no-nonsense partner, Sydney.

Art from *Enter the Body*.


WEINERSMITH
BOULET
Bea Wolf
"As haunting, hilarious and perplexing as the ancient stories one hears around the campfire, castle or cafeteria."
–LEMONY SNICKET
"Glorious, accurate, profoundly silly, and hilariously profound."
–NEIL GAIMAN

Stateless. By Elizabeth Wein. Little, Brown. Gr. 7–12.

On the brink of WWII, Stella is participating in what's supposed to be a friendly air race—only, it's quickly becoming deeply dangerous.

Middle

Bea Wolf. By Zach Weinersmith. Art by Boulet. First Second. Gr. 4–7.

Beowulf is recast with rowdy neighborhood kids standing in for medieval warriors in this uproarious and slyly educational adaptation of the Old English epic.

Mirror to Mirror. By Rajani LaRocca. HarperCollins/Quill Tree. Gr. 3–7.

Newbery Honor–winning LaRocca's latest follows a pair of twins, Maya and Chaya, who swap places at summer camp to try to understand what it's like in the other's shoes.

The Moth Keeper. By K. O'Neill. Art by the author. Random/RH Graphic. Gr. 4–8.

Anya's job as mothkeeper is essential to her village, but the loneliness of the work makes her wonder whether she's actually suited to it in this contemplative comic from the creator of *Tea Dragon Society*.

The Sun and the Star. By Rick Riordan and Mark Oshiro. Disney/Hyperion. Gr. 5–8.

Fan-favorite characters Nico and Will take center stage in this spin-off from Riordan's blockbuster Percy Jackson series.

Tacos Today. By Raúl the Third. Illus. by Raúl the Third and Elaine Bay. HarperCollins/Versify. Gr. 2–5.

This installment in the popular El Toro & Friends series follows the luchadores as they find a creative way to pay for their favorite lunch.

You Are Here: Connecting Flights. Ed. by Ellen Oh. HarperCollins/Allida. Gr. 4–7.

Twelve short stories, each featuring an East or Southeast Asian young person, revolve around seemingly unconnected events, confrontations, and conversations at an international airport.

Young

My Baba's Garden. By Jordan Scott. Illus. by Sydney Smith. Holiday/Neal Porter. PreS–Gr. 3.

Scott and Smith collaborate again, after their critically acclaimed *I Talk like a River* (2020), in this poetic ode to the author's grandmother that dwells on small moments they spend together in the garden.

The Hospital Book. By Lisa Brown. Illus. by the author. Holiday/Neal Porter. PreS–Gr. 3.

Acclaimed writer and illustrator Brown follows up her best-selling *The Airport Book* (2016) with this similar tale following a girl's trip to the hospital for a sudden illness.

Remember. By Joy Harjo. Illus. by Michaela Goade. Random House Studio. K–Gr. 3.

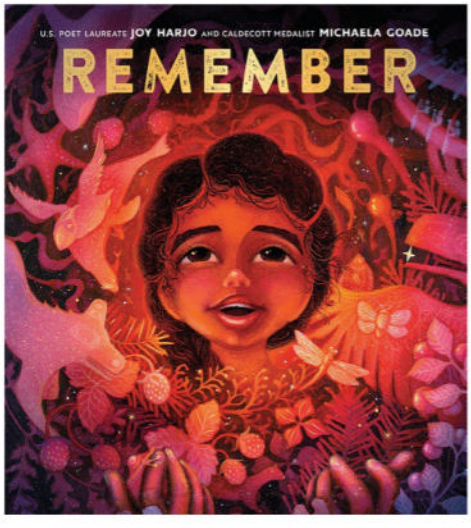
U.S. Poet Laureate Harjo's acclaimed poem becomes a beauty to behold in this reverential picture book illustrated by Caldecott Medalist Goade.

The Tree and the River. By Aaron Becker. Illus. by the author. Candlewick. K–Gr. 3.

Best-selling Becker's latest wordlessly witnesses a river through the decades, as a community builds up around it and, eventually, industrial degradation takes hold.

Twenty Questions. By Mac Barnett. Illus. by Christian Robinson. Candlewick. PreS–Gr. 3.

Beloved Barnett and Robinson team up for this playful picture book inviting readers to use their imaginations to answer open-ended questions.

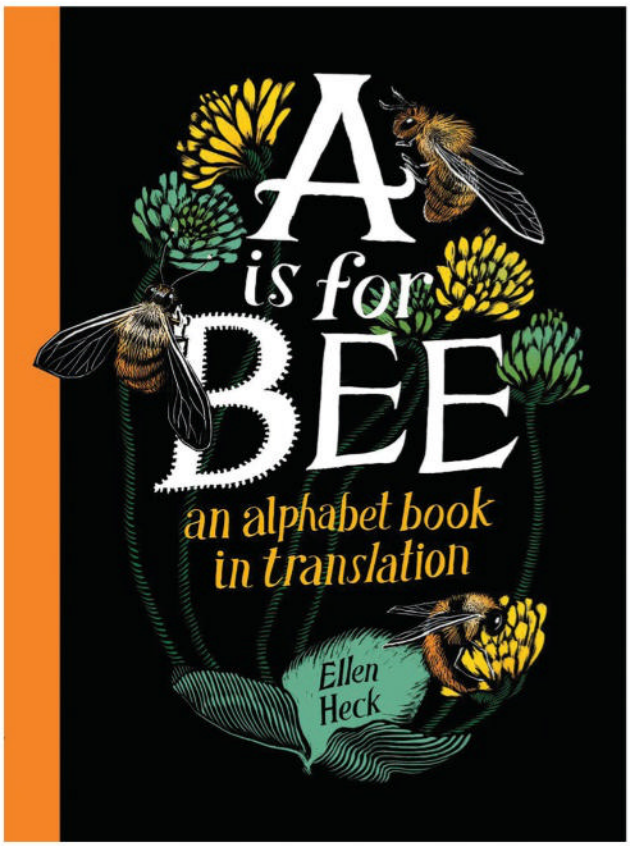


A Conversation

Ellen Heck

by Sarah Hunter

This year's Top of the List Picture Book, *A Is for Bee,* is like no alphabet book we've seen before. Ellen Heck cleverly upends readers' expectations about the alphabet by using familiar animals but, for English speakers, in an unfamiliar order: "A is for Bee," "R is for Fox," "X is for Bear," and so on. Paired with each captivating scratchboard illustration of the animal (in which the featured letter is sneakily hidden) are one or more transliterated words in a variety of non-English languages. We love this book for its stunning art, its inventive concept, and the subtle way it expands young readers' understanding of what language can do. Read on for Heck's thoughtful answers to our questions about the book, her inspiration, and what got left on the cutting room floor.



Hunter: *What was your inspiration for the project?*
Heck: I wanted to elaborate on an experience that I'd had when our son was little: We were reading a Lithuanian alphabet board book and there was no text, just letters and images of things that start with those letters . . . in Lithuanian. Next to the letter B was the photo of a monkey, but I couldn't remember the Lithuanian word for monkey. We were just staring at the B and the monkey until finally, I read "B is for Monkey!" and continued from there. It was silly and a lot of fun—both true and not true at the same time. It got me thinking about alphabet books and then more broadly about translation and the relationship between meaning and form. I wanted to share that experience with others.

Hunter: ***Beyond just letters, your book introduces a much more global concept of language than you typically see in an abecedary; what do you hope kids will get out of that element of the book?***
Heck: Hidden in the honeycomb endpages of *A Is for Bee* is the proverb: "a new language is a new world." I believe this refers to the connections we can make between concepts and things that are made possible by language.

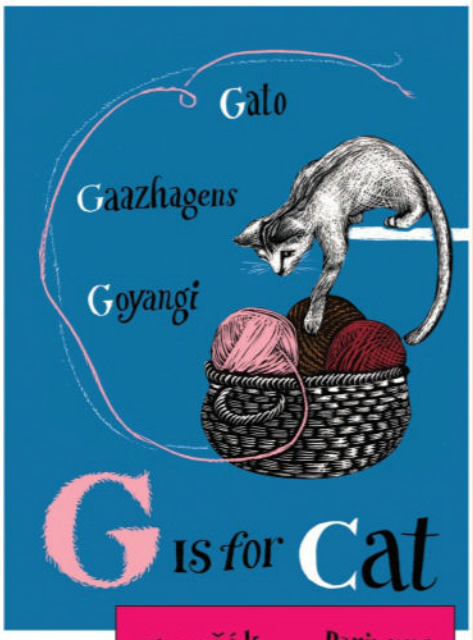
Alphabet books are helpful when we are learning to read because they link an abstract letterform to an animal or object that we already know how to say, which helps us remember the letter sounds. As we become more immersed in speaking, reading, and writing, the language in turn guides our understanding of the things we name. We get used to calling a bear a bear, and we get used to our alphabet, so it makes perfect sense to conceptually link the letter B and an actual bear, even though the animal has no real connection to the letter that is not linguistic. Still, the connection through language becomes a true thing. *B is for Bear* is almost an identity statement: B = Bear. So, simply

seeing that there are many languages in which B ≠ Bear is a way to discover that there are other truths out there. For example, X = Bear. Other conceptual connections can be made with the help of other languages.

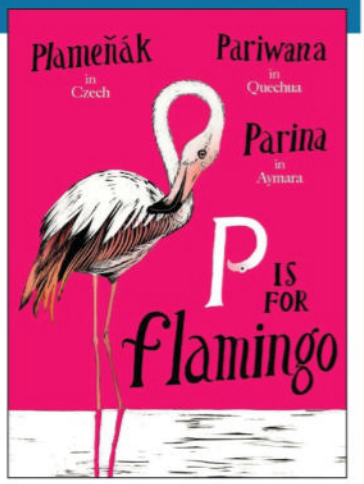
Hunter: ***Were any letters more challenging to work with than the others?***
Heck: There is a piece of me that has never been satisfied with the concessions English speakers often have to make for U, Q, and X in alphabet books. Whatever the theme, one of these three is often the problem letter that breaks the rhythm. In this one way, *A Is for Bee* was easy. Every animal represented is equally familiar. So, if this book is a puzzle, those were the corners. Everything else . . .

A Is for Bee has gone through three major revisions to arrive in its current form: The title of the first was *A Is for Monkey, Z Is for Monkey*. It was an alphabet book in which every letter stood for *monkey* in a different language. In its second form, I took the opposite strategy: every letter was different and made sense only in languages other than English. The title was *Z Is for Elephant* and some of the letters are the same as they are now. I researched broadly and paired animals with letters based on which translations were the most fun to say with my English-speaking mouth. This version focused on languages that are written with the Roman alphabet but didn't venture into the transliteration of those using other writing systems. Finally, Levine Querido was interested in publishing the book along with their Dutch counterpart. Arthur Levine encouraged me to make the language selection more global, so I rearranged nearly half of the letters to include transliterated translations and to make sure that all the letter-animal pairings would not work (and therefore work) in both the English and Dutch editions. *A* was one of the letters that needed to be changed because *A Is for Monkey* makes sense in Dutch in which the word for *monkey* is *aap*. The research for that change produced the title *A Is for Bee*. It was one of those glorious discoveries that comes out of a long process of revision, collaboration, and chance. The title is the essence of the book.

Hunter: ***You consulted with a lot of native speakers of the languages featured in the book; did you learn anything surprising when working with them?***
Heck: At the fact-checking stage, I was lucky to be working with the whole Levine Querido team. It took a village. I had one spreadsheet and LQ had their own independent spreadsheet. Sometimes consulting multiple sources helped to verify a word, but other times it revealed topics worthy of dissertations: the placement of vowels in contemporary Hebrew, the Mandarin linking of adjectives to nouns to distinguish between homophones, the tendency for animal names in Indigenous languages to label *species* as opposed to the more general *orders* or *families* of animals. The latter was my favorite discovery, and it made me want to speak more specifically about nature from now on.



Hunter: ***What were some of your favorite words that didn't make the cut?***
Heck: I'm thankful that you ask this question because cutting some of my favorite words was painful! *Millimallikas* is at the top of the list. It's the Estonian word for *moon jelly*, but not, unfortunately for *jellyfish* in general. I also loved *Nefkok* and *Nosorog*, the Icelandic and Croatian words for *rhinoceros* because they sound like light Shakespearean insults. Finally, *Qasikalolo*, the Fijian word for *ant*, sounds like the beginning of a song.



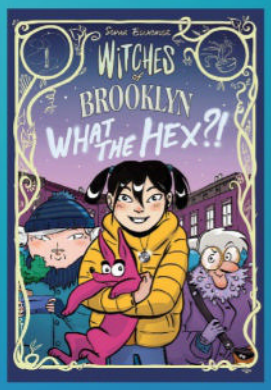
Hunter: ***Your other work is in fine arts; how has that influenced your picture-book work? And, alternately, how does your picture-book work influence your fine art?***
Heck: For about a decade, I've been using visual art to try to better understand identity in its most basic sense: What makes a *thing* a *thing*? I believe the answer lies somewhere in its relationship to other things, and this has resulted in several projects that involve reorganizing images. While identity statements look a bit different in different fields (in math, we use the = symbol to equate one concept to another, while in the arts, we often use metaphor), in both fields, interesting things start happening when we learn to change the two concepts being linked and how they are linked. When that change sparks an idea, it's magic. In art (and I think picture books can be included in art), even more than trying to convey an idea, I'm trying to recreate those sparks.

Book Map

Amari and the Night Brothers

by Julia Smith

A book map is a unique and useful tool that lets readers discover books based on shared traits. These maps can be fashioned in countless ways, but here, I've selected B. B. Alston's popular *Amari and the Night Brothers* (2021) as a starting point for readers to travel to unexpected places (and genres) by simply following their hearts.



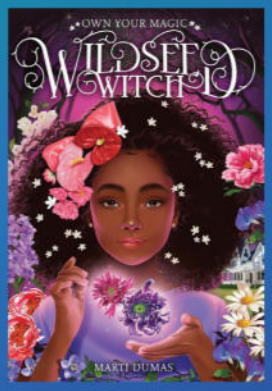
Witches of Brooklyn, by Sophie Escabasse (2020)

Quirky Family

My Aunt Is a Monster, by Reimena Yee (2022)

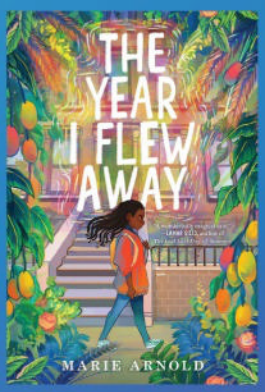
Witches

Wildseed Witch, by Marti Dumas (2022)



Magic School

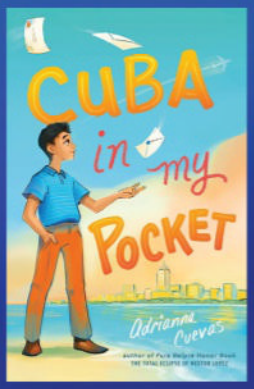
New Kid



The Year I Flew Away, by Marie Arnold (2021)

Immigration

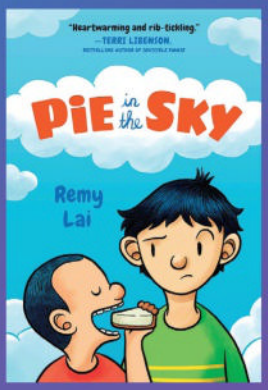
Serious



Cuba in My Pocket, by Adrianna Cuevas (2021)

Funny

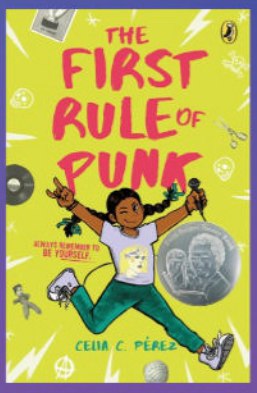
Grief



Pie in the Sky, by Remy Lai (2019)

Illustrated

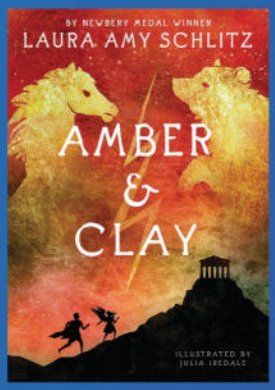
The First Rule of Punk, by Celia C. Pérez (2017)



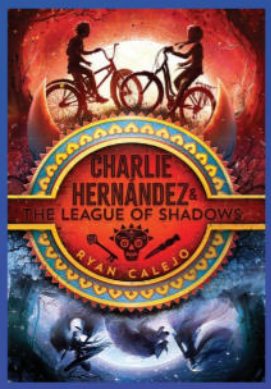
Jennifer Chan Is Not Alone, by Tae Keller (2022)

Bullying

Amber and Clay, by Laura Amy Schlitz (2021)



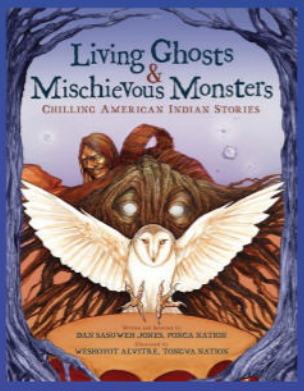
Contemporary



Charlie Hernández and the League of Shadows, by Ryan Calejo (2018)

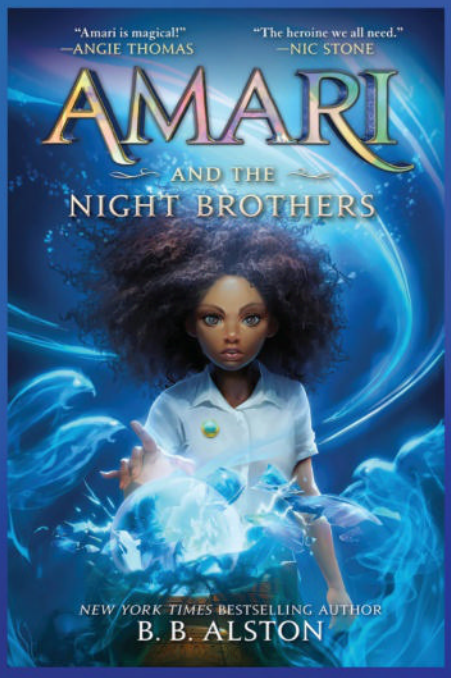
Folklore/ Mythology

Nonfiction



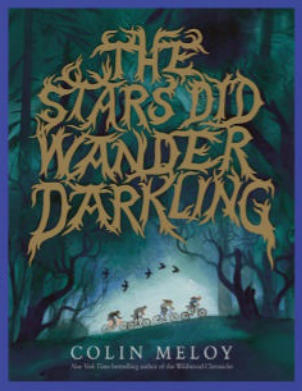
Living Ghosts and Mischievous Monsters, by Dan SaSuWeh Jones (2021)

Historical


"Amari is magical!" —ANGIE THOMAS
"The heroine we all need." —NIC STONE
AMARI AND THE NIGHT BROTHERS
NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR
B. B. ALSTON

Maya and the Rising Dark, by Rena Barron (2020)

STRANGER THINGS



The Stars Did Wander Darkling, by Colin Meloy (2022)

Adventure

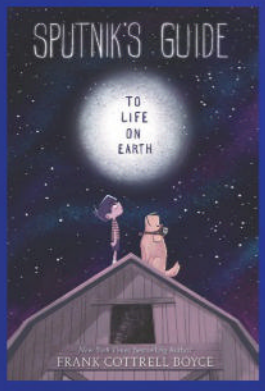
Scary?

No

Yes

Aliens

The Best at It, by Maulik Pancholy (2019)



Sputnik's Guide to Life on Earth, by Frank Cottrell Boyce (2017)

Whispering Pines, by Heidi Lang and Kati Bartkowski (2020)

This Was Our Pact, by Ryan Andrews (2019)

Art from *Incendiary,* by Zoraida Córdova.

The Essentials

From Page to Screen and Back to Page

by Sarah Hunter

As more and more books are adapted for the small screen, TV shows are increasingly a useful path for finding your next favorite read. Whether you've read the book or seen the show first, fans of the teen TV programs below should be just as pleased to dive into the related titles (some of which, recursively, are *also* on their way to appearing on the small screen).

Heartstopper (Netflix). Based on Alice Oseman's comic series of the same name, this sweet rom-com features slow-burning crushes and coming-out narratives, healing from a toxic relationship, and leaning into warm friendships.

Bloom. By Kevin Panetta. Art by Savanna Ganucheau. 2019. First Second. Gr. 9–12.

Ari wants to leave his beach town for good, but first he must find someone to replace him at his dad's bakery. Capable (and adorable) Hector is perfect for the job, but after a summer of flirting between the two boys, Ari starts to question his desire to leave.

Laura Dean Keeps Breaking Up with Me. By Mariko Tamaki. Art by Rosemary Valero-O'Connell. 2019. First Second. Gr. 9–12.

Freddy is inexorably caught in the orbit of enigmatic Laura Dean. Over the course of this languorously paced comic, Freddy learns how to stand up for herself with Laura and strengthens her bond with her true friends.

The Summer of Everything. By Julian Winters. 2020. Interlude/Duet. Gr. 9–12.

Wes is caught between a crush on best friend Nico, whose sexuality is an enigma, and new boy Manu during a summer when he's driven to save the charming bookstore he loves with all his heart.

Thieves. By Lucie Bryon. Art by the author. 2022. Nobrow. Gr. 10–12.

Ella's been crushing on Madeline for ages, so when they finally meet at a house party, it's a dream come true. Only, Ella accidentally stole a bag full of objects from a closet in the house—which turns out to be Madeline's! Thankfully, that meet-weird only fuels their playful, sweet romance.

One of Us Is Lying (Peacock). Four teens are the only witnesses to the death of one of their classmates, Simon, during after-school detention in this adaptation of Karen M. McManus' best-selling novel.

Ace of Spades. By Faridah Àbíké-Íyímídé. 2021. Feiwel and Friends. Gr. 9–12.

Devon and Chiamaka are the new prefects at their prestigious academy, and soon they're both receiving suspicious texts threatening to reveal their secrets—a cruel prank that quickly turns sinister.

How We Fall Apart. By Katie Zhao. 2021. Bloomsbury. Gr. 9–12.

An anonymous poster implicates four high-achieving prep school students in the death of the top-ranked student in their class *and* threatens to reveal reputation-ruining secrets in this twisty, fast-paced novel.

Let Me Hear a Rhyme. By Tiffany D. Jackson. 2019. HarperCollins/Katherine Tegen. Gr. 9–12.

In 1990s Brooklyn, Quadir and Jarrell are determined to make sure their murdered friend, Stephon, will get the musical acclaim he deserves, even posthumously. Stephon's

sister, Jasmine, is in on the scheme, but she has another agenda: find her brother's killer.

Truly Devious. By Maureen Johnson. 2018. HarperCollins/Katherine Tegen. Gr. 9–12.

Stevie Bell is at Ellington Academy to investigate a cold case from the 1930s, but her new housemates have secrets of their own. Will digging into the past have fatal consequences for the present?

Ms. Marvel (Disney+). G. Willow Wilson's comics about Kamala Khan seriously shook up the Marvel Comics scene when they first were published, and this show leans into the elements that made the comics so fresh and appealing: Kamala's Pakistani identity and her relatable teenage concerns.

Faith: Taking Flight. By Julie Murphy. 2020. HarperCollins/Balzer+Bray. Gr. 9–12.

Faith loves superheroes, though she's never seen a fat one in mainstream media. That all changes when she becomes a superhero herself and quickly has to master her burgeoning powers while nursing a crush on the star actress filming a show in her town.

Hollow Fires. By Samira Ahmed. 2022. Little, Brown. Gr. 9–12.

Safiya is on a mission for justice after an Iraqi refugee student from another school is murdered. Her search puts her in danger, however, and soon she's facing intense Islamophobia and racism just as she learns that not everything is as it seems in the case.

Shadowshaper. By Daniel José Older. 2015. Scholastic/Arthur A. Levine. Gr. 8–11.

When Sierra discovers her innate talents as a shadowshaper, a power she's inherited from her Puerto Rican ancestors, she's quickly brought into a cadre of similarly powerful neighbors who are fighting back against a power-hungry anthropologist.

Super Adjacent. By Crystal Cestari. 2020. Little, Brown. Gr. 7–10.

When Claire's hired as an intern in a superhero organization, she's ecstatic, but the inside glimpse of the industry gives her pause, and when supervillains overwhelm the superheroes she so idolizes, she and her similarly un-powered coworker have to figure out how to save the day.

Shadow & Bone (Netflix). High fantasy, secret identities, a looming threat, and a team of incorrigible con artists—is it any wonder that Leigh Bardugo's best-selling series makes for excellent TV?

Children of Blood and Bone. By Tomi Adeyemi. 2018. Holt. Gr. 9–12.

Adeyemi's explosive debut, the start of a trilogy, is set in a world where magic is tightly controlled, but Zélie is secretly learning to fight, and the oppressive King's own daughter is on a mission to free magic for maji everywhere.

An Ember in the Ashes. By Sabaa Tahir. 2015. Razorbill. Gr. 9–12.

It's the Martials versus the Scholars in this expansive series starter, which features magic, political intrigue, and daring escapes. A prequel series, in graphic-novel form, makes the story even grander, so there's plenty to sink into here.

The Gilded Wolves. By Roshani Chokshi. 2019. St. Martin's/Wednesday. Gr. 9–12.

Chokshi takes readers to a fictional nineteenth-century Paris, where a motley crew of clever criminals schemes to steal back an inheritance. Viewers who loved the story of the Crows in Bardugo's universe will especially appreciate this heist story.

Incendiary. By Zoraida Córdova. 2020. Little, Brown. Gr. 8–12.

Renata holds tremendous power, even terrifying her own people. When the leader of her rebel group is captured by the vicious king who also abducted Renata as a child, she returns to the kingdom in order to complete her commander's mission.

Art from *Theives,* written and illustrated by Lucie Bryon.

A Conversation

Shaun Tan

by Sarah Hunter

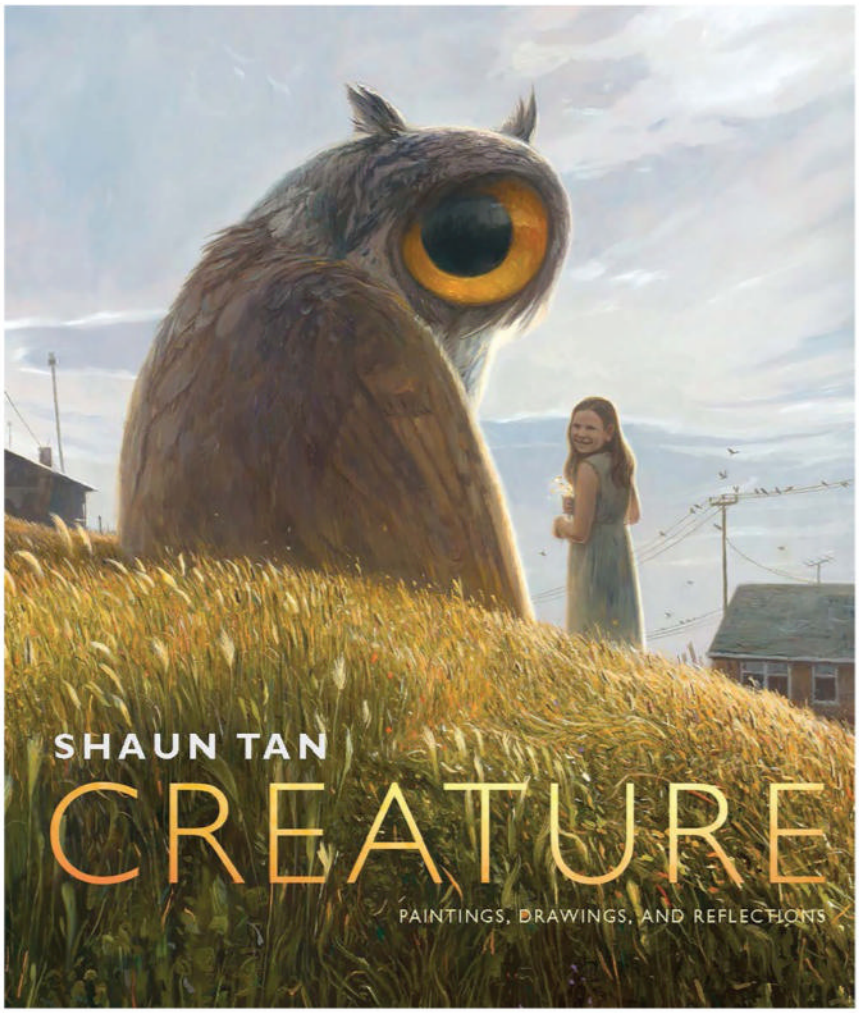
For nearly three decades, Shaun Tan has been beguiling readers with his picture books, comics, and illustrations, which resist easy categorization. Almost uniformly, they cast familiar settings or figures in an otherworldly light; sometimes it's an animal that's unusually large or a mechanical being exuding oddly human qualities. Often his books are published for children, but their interest doesn't stop with young readers; adults can just as easily connect to Tan's strange, fascinating images. His latest, *Creature: Paintings, Drawings, and Reflections*, collects select images from those years of work and frames them with thought-provoking essays on his inspirations and creativity and the recurring themes of his work. We spoke with Tan about the book and the process of selecting the pieces, and a portion of his generous answers appear here; find the full interview online.

Hunter: ***Tell us how you went about selecting the pieces to include in the book. Did you have a sense of its structure?***
Tan: Not especially, and this collection had a very long genesis. Originally, I was reviewing the past 25 years of unpublished illustration work under the working title "Untold Tales," images that suggest unwritten stories. All artists and writers have a ton of great ideas that, for whatever reason, never see the light of day but still imply quite compelling and mysterious narratives.

I've always wanted to share these things with a wider audience, especially as I think this kind of work is actually more revealing of artistic process and imaginative spirit than other more structured and measured picture books, graphic novels, or film. I often think about this when visiting other artists' studios, too. You will typically see a wonderful and eclectic array of miscellaneous things, off-casts and orphans, experiments and unfinished pieces that are beautiful in their own right and deeply interesting. They collectively build a kind of picture, a sense of overarching investigation into reality, of subconscious personality, and creative process.

But what is that overall picture? I think it's hard to nail, because creativity is necessarily random and a bit confusing, especially when having to review one's own work. I needed to look for recurring themes, some kind of anchor.

Perhaps the most prominent one, or at least the most consistent over the years, was the presence of strange creatures. Even when they are familiar animals, like sparrows or cats, they always look a bit strange, a bit outsized or unnatural, weirdly juxtaposed. It's as if I keep returning again and again to this same dream: an odd being in a landscape, often interacting casually with a human. So that became my anchor, and finally, after about five years of collating material, the structure for this book clicked.



Hunter: ***What, if anything, did the process of reviewing your work as a whole reveal to you about your life as an artist?***
Tan: I think both positive and negative things, which maybe we all feel when reviewing old work, a bit like looking through old photos. Some work I'd previously dismissed actually looked very good years later, and the converse was also true; some work felt very contrived, pretentious, or obscure. Mainly I'm surprised that the essential spirit of the imagery is so consistent, even when the style and subjects vary quite a bit. It offers some insight into basic personality, I guess, and not something that's actually very recognizable to me. That is, I find the work surprising and a bit strange, as if drawn by another person, and revealing anxieties and passions that don't seem so prevalent in my day-to-day life. Am I really thinking and feeling these things? I guess so!

Creatures provide such an excellent "back door" for this kind of revelation. I'm not very good at representing memories and experiences directly, or writing stories about things too close to reality, painting straight portraits, and that kind of thing. I worry too much about getting it right, perhaps, or finding the correct viewpoint, the proper representation. Reality is very confusing that way, so variable and hard to grasp. However, when I draw a creature or tell a dreamlike story, it takes some pressure of veracity away, and ironically I seem better able to express true feelings and thoughts. Perhaps all fiction works like this, a little like dreams. The context is weird but the feelings feel true and even more accessible somehow.

One interesting example is a painting in the book titled "All we ever wanted," of a couple renovating a giant skull as a home, with a colourful garden, chickens, a donkey, and a windmill, all in an otherwise pretty desolate space. It's a bright and happy scene, underscored by some sense of death, a thing calmly accepted. I only realized toward the end of the painting process that the figures are wearing the same clothes I remember my parents wearing around the time they were building a family home, in my early childhood. In fact, it feels like quite an accurate representation of that experience, of turning a sandy, windswept block of land in outer suburbia into a wonderful home with a dense vegetable garden at the back. It's a better painting of that collected memory than anything I might have tried to represent more consciously, more realistically. It looks weird but feels right. That's basically what I'm looking for in all my paintings, that weird rightness.

Hunter: ***You talk a lot in the book about play and joy, but I also notice a slight undercurrent of menace in your artwork. Is that something you notice as well? And how does that fit into the overarching theme of playfulness?***
Tan: Yes, it's funny you mention that, because that slightly surprises me when I look back on decades of work, even going back to childhood stuff—the darkness, the themes of loneliness and dislocation. I'm still wondering where that comes from. I do think it fits very well with playfulness and

joy, because when painting, you are always looking for differences, for opposites and contrast. Every color, line, and form exists in relief against others, just as words do. The same is true of ideas. When I begin with a silly, joyful, humorous idea, it always tends to whip back the other way.

My story "The Lost Thing" is a good example. It was the first picture book I wrote, after illustrating many other writers, and partly in response to becoming pigeonholed early on as an illustrator of dark subjects. Up until then, all my picture books had been more or less about death: colonial genocide (*The Rabbits*), apocalypse (*The Viewer*), and war (*Memorial*), plus a bunch of horror stories. But I loved humor and silliness too, having worked occasionally as a gag cartoonist. I wrote the kind of story nobody else was going to give me, about a silly creature washed up on a beach. The original draft was light and fun, my publisher pleasantly surprised. But as the story evolved, it darkened; the environment became one of bleak industrial bureaucracy, the characters emotionally troubled, the ending a little bit disturbing. But that was the natural balance to the jaunty, fun tone that ran all the way through. I think that carefully balanced tension is what made the book work and become so adaptable as a short film that really resonated with audiences. It set the tone for much of the work that followed.

I think that, to answer your question, it's also a deep reflection of my feelings about the world, that it is a strange mix of horror and joy, of beauty and wretchedness. It's hard to really focus on one without admitting the other. My favorite books, paintings, and films are those that have both, layered one on top of the other.

Hunter: ***In your experience, how do you think adults and children look at art differently?***

Tan: Of course, it's hard to make generalizations; children and adults are all so different. But one thing I've noticed is that children tend to be slightly better readers of pictures, more patient, and with less theoretical expectation. They rarely ask what a picture means—they are too busy exploring it or thinking about how it makes them feel, what it reminds them of. And that's the perfect way to look at pictures.

They are also much better at noticing details, especially small but important ones. Perhaps my most telling experience here is with the book *The Red Tree*. It's more or less about depression, where every painting shows a very grim and rather hopeless scene. But hidden everywhere is a tiny red leaf, in a gutter, floating in the background, resting on a window frame. Most children notice it straight away, surprisingly quickly, and they see it as a key connector between all the pictures, and a positive one at that. They intuitively make hopeful remarks about it, delight in finding it. Many adults never see it and find the book a little puzzling, not to mention pretty darn miserable, for having missed this vital connective thread. The book is really all about how misery comes from a failure to see such threads, for whatever reason.

The other thing about that book that's interesting is that many adults thought it was not suitable for younger readers and that it presented a distorted view of reality. I myself wasn't sure if they were right or wrong about that, I don't really write and illustrate specifically for young readers anyway. But then I discovered that children, when asked, actually found it very entertaining and fun. They loved reading it; they deeply identified with it, often saying it felt "real." They also commented that the book feels extremely hopeful to them, largely because they anchored all meaningful feeling to the little red leaves and the red tree that appears mysteriously at the end. That's another thing I've noticed about children, including my own. They are so naturally optimistic and looking for signs of love and hope, and they will amplify these when found and hold them as a light against all other fears and anxieties. As someone who is a pretty cynical and pessimistic adult much of the time, I've learnt a lot from this, from seeing how younger readers respond to my work, how determined they are to find good things. They've taught me new ways to look, think, and feel.

Top 10

Arts Books for Youth

From putting on a ballet to designing clothes to finding art in surprising objects, these fiction and nonfiction books dig into the unexpected, showcasing moments of beauty and the people who create them.

A Is for Oboe: The Orchestra's Alphabet. By Lera Auerbach and Marilyn Nelson. Illus. by Paul Hoppe. 2021. Dial. Gr. 1–4.

Stunning poetry and vivid illustrations turn an orchestra into a living, breathing thing in this lesson on how to listen. The artistic merit of the book and the accessible introduction to musical concepts will inspire young musicians.

Ablaze with Color: A Story of Painter Alma Thomas. By Jeanne Walker Harvey. Illus. by Loveis Wise. 2022. Harper. K–Gr. 3.

As a Black artist, Alma Thomas faced segregation in her education and life but ultimately achieved great success. This book gorgeously showcases the art she produced during her long, and at times tumultuous, life.

And They Lived . . .. By Steven Salvatore. 2022. Bloomsbury. Gr. 9–12.

Chase Arthur is thrilled (and anxious) about entering his dream animation program. He turns to his art to help process his struggle with body dysmorphia and confusion about his gender identity.

Bottle Tops: The Art of El Anatsui. By Alison Goldberg. Illus. by Elizabeth Zunon. 2022. Lee & Low. Gr. 2–5.

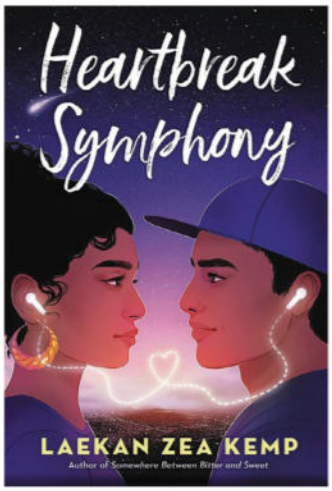
Robustly researched and strikingly designed, this biography of Ghanian artist El Anatsui explores his found-object art, his history and successes, and the collaborative elements of his work.

Curtain Up! Behind the Scenes at the Royal Opera House. By Royal Opera House. Illus. by Lauren O'Hara. 2022. Thames & Hudson. PreS–Gr. 3.

The resident cat of London's Royal Opera House takes viewers on a backstage tour of a production of *The Nutcracker,* visiting dancers, pit-orchestra and crew members, the props and makeup departments, and more.

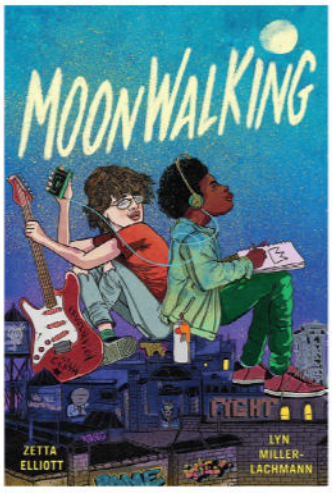
Dream, Annie, Dream. By Waka T. Brown. 2022. HarperCollins/Quill Tree. Gr. 4–7.

Growing up in 1987 Kansas as a second-generation Japanese American, Annie questions her friendships and place in the world. During her seventh-grade year, three community theater productions help her gain clarity.



Heartbreak Symphony. By Laekan Zea Kemp. 2022. Little, Brown. Gr. 9–12.

Haunted by personal and generational trauma, Aarón Medrano and Mia Villanueva both turn to music. When a failed audition brings the two grieving narrators together, Kemp brings elements of music, healing, and community together in a narrative symphony.



Mister Rogers' Gift of Music. By Donna Cangelosi. Illus. by Amanda Calatzis. 2022. Page Street. PreS–Gr. 2.

This picture book explores Fred Rogers' affinity for music, which he developed at a young age, came to rely on as a kind of therapy, and integrated into his later work.

Moonwalking. By Zetta Elliott and Lyn Miller-Lachmann. 2022. Farrar. Gr. 5–8.

In 1980s Brooklyn, Afro-Latinx Pie and white J.J. strike up a friendship fueled by their two artistic loves—graffiti art and music—until an incident with the police threatens their bond.

A Perfect Fit: How Lena "Lane" Bryant Changed the Shape of Fashion. By Mara Rockliff. Illus. by Juana Martinez-Neal. 2022. Clarion. K–Gr. 2.

Inspired first by a pregnant client, clothing designer Lane Bryant altered basic patterns to accommodate a wider range of body shapes, soon becoming a pioneer in plus-size fashion.

Book Hooks

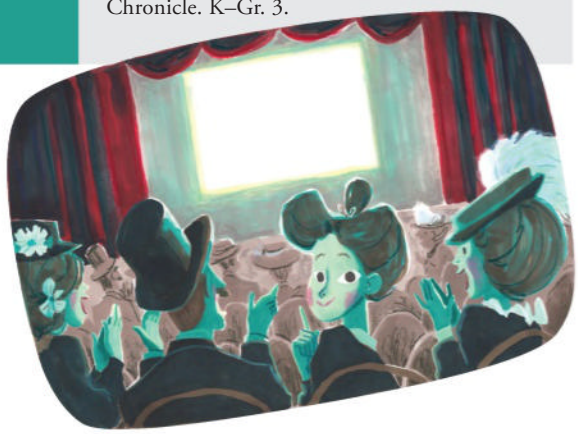
Books about the Big Screen

by Angela Leeper

Why has no one heard of Alice Guy-Blaché?

Alice was the first female filmmaker in the world. Because she was a woman, credit for her movies was given to her male assistants in the early days of film.

Lights! Camera! Alice! The Thrilling True Adventures of the First Woman Filmmaker. By Mara Rockliff. Illus. by Simona Ciraolo. Chronicle. K–Gr. 3.

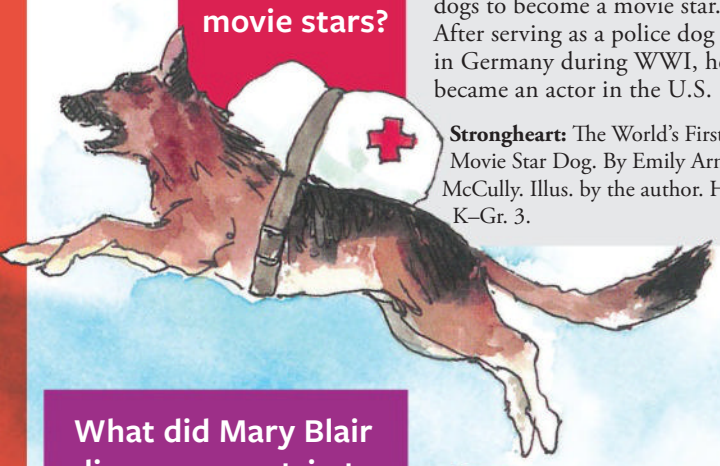


How do actors leap off tall buildings or soar through the air?

They use rigging made of wires and harnesses to keep them safe. Later, filmmakers use a computer to remove the rigging.

Movie Magic Stunts. By Sara Green. Bellwether. Gr. 3–6.

Can dogs be movie stars?



Strongheart was one of the first dogs to become a movie star. After serving as a police dog in Germany during WWI, he became an actor in the U.S.

Strongheart: The World's First Movie Star Dog. By Emily Arnold McCully. Illus. by the author. Holt. K–Gr. 3.

Are actresses just known for their pretty faces?

Actress Hedy Lamarr invented frequency hopping to help ships command their torpedoes during WWII. This technology is used in our cell phones today!

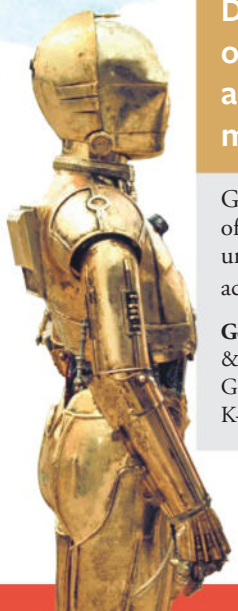
Hedy Lamarr's Double Life: Hollywood Legend and Brilliant Inventor. By Laurie Wallmark. Illus. by Katy Wu. Sterling. Gr. 2–4.

What did Mary Blair discover on a trip to South America with Walt Disney?

One of Disney's favorite animators, Mary discovered bright and happy colors. She later defied the rules of color in *Cinderella*, *Peter Pan*, and other Disney animations.

Mary Blair's Unique Flair. By Amy Novesky. Illus. by Brittney Lee. Disney. Gr. 1–3.

Did the director of *Star Wars* always want to make movies?



George Lucas dreamed of being a race car driver until he suffered a bad car accident in high school.

George Lucas: Filmmaker & Creator of Star Wars. By Grace Hansen. ABDO. K–Gr. 2.

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